

THE FOUNTAINS OF THE SAVIOUR

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THE FOUNTAINS OF THE SAVIOUR

REFLECTIONS FOR THE HOLY HOUR

BY THE

REV. JOHN H. O'ROURKE, S. J.

Author of "Under the Sanctuary Lamp"

"You shall draw waters, with joy
Out of the fountains of the Saviour."

ISAIAH XII, 3.

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die 22 Octobris, 1912

To the Right Reverend
CHARLES EDWARD McDONNELL, D.D.,
Bishop of Brooklyn.

RT. REV. AND DEAR BISHOP:

I am grateful for the privilege of dedicating to you my little volume, "The Fountains of the Saviour." It is a small, but sincere and affectionate, tribute for frequent words of encouragement and for many acts of kindness.

I am, my dear Bishop,

Sincerely yours,

JOHN H. O'ROURKE, S.J.

Brooklyn College, October 7, 1912.

PREFACE

These papers, written monthly for *The Messenger of the Sacred Heart*, are a continuation of a former series published in a small volume under the name of "Under the Sanctuary Lamp." It has been suggested to give this present series a new title to avoid confusion with its predecessor, which, much to the writer's surprise, has had a very wide circulation.

The title of this present volume, "The Fountains of the Saviour," is thought to be in keeping with the subjects treated within its pages. For the Beatitudes and the Baptist's Example and the Home at Bethany may not inappropriately be looked upon as flowing to us from the love of the Sacred Heart.

It were ungrateful not to express my thanks to two very dear friends, Fathers Joseph H. Smith, S.J., and Mark J. McNeal, S.J., who, by their careful revision and proof-reading, have made the publication of this volume possible.

JOHN H. O'ROURKE, S.J.

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THE WELL-SPRING OF HAPPINESS

DURING some of these Holy Hours let us linger on the "Mount of the Beatitudes" and drink in prayerfully the teachings of our Blessed Master. Let us join the multitudes, "from Galilee and from Decapolis, from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from beyond the Jordan, and the seacoast both of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases." Like them we shall gaze upon His face, look into the loving eyes that Mary loved, and listen to the sweet music of His voice. Like the multitudes who in the Syrian noon quenched their thirst from the springs that gushed from the Sacred Mountain while they slaked their souls' thirst with draughts of wisdom from the lips of Jesus, we too have come to drink from "the Fountains of the Saviour."

The night before the "Sermon on the Mount" our Lord had watched in prayer. It was His wont to pass in prayer the nights which preceded the more important events of His life. At dawn as the clouds were growing crimson and gold above the heights and down over the hill country, our Lord descended from His

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vigil with the Father and picked out the twelve who were henceforth to be His Apostles. The scene of His night-watching was a lonely mountain on the road from Tiberias to Nazareth, about six miles northwest of the former town. From this eminence the Lake so dear to the Heart of our Blessed Saviour could be seen. In the clear morning air it stood out nearly two thousand feet below, glinting under the early light streaming over the hills. The fishermen were putting into the shore in their heavily laden boats after the night of toil. Our Blessed Saviour could almost hear the waves murmuring on the beach as they chased each other up the sloping shore and broke into foam on the sand. Away in the distance to the north, Lebanon, from which Solomon cut the cedars for the temple, was brightening under the sun's rays. The Jordan was hastening from Lake Merom down into the bosom of the outstretched sea, over whose eastern bank frowned the mountains which lost themselves in the eastern desert. Along the curved western shore Capharnaum and Magdala and Tiberias were awaking to the labors of a new day, and already the busy life was beginning within their narrow streets. Surely His thoughts that morning would dwell

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lovingly on the scene before Him. Many of His miracles had been already wrought and others would be done on that dear shore. There He would one day feed the multitude and tell them, the next day, on the opposite side: "I am the Living Bread," and some who were now looking up into His face would because of this truth "walk with Him no more." It was from Magdala that Mary came to find pardon at His feet and become the trophy of the Saviour's forgiving love. On that Lake He was to speak the word of command, and its waves would be lulled to sleep and its harsh winds calmed and hushed.

With these and other memories in His mind, our Lord, after having chosen the twelve, led them partly up the hill from which, after His night of prayer, He had descended, to an elevated plateau. Hither then His Apostles and Disciples and a great multitude, not only from the neighboring towns but from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon and from Jerusalem and beyond the Jordan, followed Him. "And all the multitude sought to touch Him, for virtue went out from Him and healed all. And when He had sat down His Disciples came to Him. And lifting up His eyes on His Disciples, and opening His mouth, He taught them saying:

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“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” Thus it was that the Divine Teacher of the New Law, after He had, with loving condescension, cured the physical ills of all who were brought to Him, promulgated those heavenly maxims which are to be the healing of the moral diseases of the nations.

Long years ago God spoke to the children of Israel and promulgated His Commandments, but how different the circumstances from those which surround the preaching of the Beatitudes. In both cases the people were prepared for the manifestation of the Divine will by a series of wonders and miracles. Before the Law was delivered on Mount Sinai, God had scourged the Egyptians till they let Israel come out from the bondage of Egypt. He then led His people dryshod over the Red Sea and fed them with manna in their wanderings through the desert. The legislation on the Mount in Galilee was preceded by marvels of tenderness and love on the part of the Sacred Heart towards all the sick that were brought to Him. He had passed through the hills and towns of the up-country and healing had gone out from His touch, kindness from His eyes, comfort from His lips. In days of

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old the Tables of Stone were given to Moses on Mount Sinai which the people had been forbidden to approach: "for on the third day the Lord will come down in sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. And thou shalt say to them: Take heed you go not up into the mount and that you touch not the borders thereof: every one that toucheth the mount dying he shall die."

On the Mount of the Beatitudes the New Covenant was made by our Lord, not amidst thunder, smoke, flame and fire, not upon a mountain the people might not tread, but upon the slope of the green hill which bent down towards the sea. The Beatitudes were preached amidst all the spring beauty of quiet sunrise on the Lake, and those to whom the Law was spoken were not kept at a distance from the mount by fear and terror, but the multitudes followed Him hungering for His teaching, eager to look into His face and to hear the sweet music of His voice, anxious to touch even His garment, for from that touch not weakness and death, but strength and life went forth. Instead of a prohibition to approach the mountain, the loving Master was inviting all to come and listen to His words: "Come to Me, all of you that labor and are

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burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." The Decalogue brought down to the people was written on tables of stone, and because of the sin of the people those tables were broken and shattered to pieces by Moses in his anger at the foot of the mountain. The Beatitudes were written on the Heart of Christ, and because of the sins of the people, that Heart was torn by the spear on Mount Calvary. These Precepts delivered on the Mount of Galilee were to be written also, as Jeremias had foretold, in the hearts of men: "Behold, the days shall come and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Juda, not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. I will write it in their hearts, and I will be their God and they shall be My people." Hence the Law of the New Dispensation is a law of love. It is to be kept not from a spirit of fear, nor is it to be regarded as a hard and stern duty, but it is to be obeyed in a spirit of filial love and affection. It is not to be taken as a task which a slave performs through ter-

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ror of the lash, but it ought to be looked upon as a privilege and an honor, for "to serve Him is to reign." St. Paul, too, has told us: "Lo then, brethren, we are not the children of the bondwoman, but of the free: by the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free." And the Master Himself has said: "My yoke is sweet and My burden light." The cross presses heavily on the shoulders of those only who bear and carry it unwillingly.

Moses, who was chosen by God to deliver the Law at the foot of Mount Sinai to the Jews, was the leader of the people. He led them out from the slavery of Egypt over the Red Sea. For forty years, while they were fed on the manna which fell from heaven at the early dawn, he guided them in all their wanderings to the Promised Land. Finally he died on Mount Nebo, within sight of "all the land of Galaad as far as Dan," and he was buried "in the land of Moab over against Phogor; and no man hath known of his sepulchre until this present day. And there arose no more a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."

The new Covenant was proclaimed by our Blessed Saviour Himself. He was to lead, not alone the Jews from the darkness and slavery

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along the Nile, but "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples and tongues." He would feed them during their journey, not on manna such as the Israelites gathered every morning till they crossed the Jordan into the Land of Promise, but for all time He would feed the starving generations on the manna of the New Law, His own Body and Blood. For He did "feed the people with the food of angels and gave them bread prepared without labor: having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste." Strengthened by this food He would guide them, not to the Holy City and the Temple which stood upon Mount Moriah within the walls of Jerusalem, but to the Holy City of the new Jerusalem, whose gates "shall be built of sapphire and of emerald and all the walls thereof round about of precious stones." Moses, filled with compassion for the suffering of the people, erected the brazen serpent, and all who looked upon it were cured. The Law-giver of the New Law had Himself lifted up on the wood of the cross, and all who look upon the bleeding form of their Master are healed. While marching through the desert the Amalecites, confident of victory, attacked the children of Israel. Moses charged Josue



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to lead the troops against the enemy. All day long the battle raged, and Moses prayed for victory on the mountain-top. "And when Moses lifted up his hands, Israel overcame; but if he let them down a little, Amalec overcame. And Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands on both sides. And it came to pass that his hands were not weary until sunset. And Josue put Amalec and his people to flight." So our Blessed Saviour many a time had raised His hands on the mountain for us in prayer during the long watches of the night. But the day came when He ascended the Mount of Calvary, not with Aaron and Hur, but with two thieves, and was crucified between them. They did not hold up His hands while He interceded for us, but those hands were held up by the rough nails which pierced them. In that prayer of blood we have victory over every enemy. In uttering that prayer our Mediator died upon the mount of shame and "His tomb shall be glorious." No wonder then that the Old Law was a law of prohibitions and threats; the New Law, a law of rewards, of hope and of love.

Turning now from the Lawgiver to the Law itself, we find certain traits common to all the Beatitudes which may be indicated before

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taking up each Beatitude singly. In the beginning, when God created this beautiful world, when the earth which was "void and empty" began to teem with a new-born life, when the "darkness which was upon the face" of the earth had grown into light, then the Creator saw that His works were good and He consecrated them by His blessing. So on the Mount of Galilee a new creation was springing into existence, a new life into being—not a life in the natural order, but in the supernatural; not of time, but of eternity; not of earth, but of Heaven. And our Blessed Saviour, the author of this new existence, of this new world, was bestowing His benediction upon it. He was giving expression to the Laws upon which this new kingdom was to be built, according to which this new life was to be lived. This new world and its laws were as far above the old creation, as grace is above nature; as the immortal soul is above the perishable body. On that day, therefore, on the hill overlooking the lake, our Blessed Saviour stamped with the grace and favor of His benediction a new code. He blessed new truths through the observance of which, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, man can grow into a spiritual maturity and perfection after the model of the great

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Lawgiver Himself; or as St. Paul has it: "unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ." These Laws of spiritual growth must be followed, and followed closely, if we do not wish to be content with a supernatural development that shall be dwarfed and stunted. They are the only road we are to travel if we are to reach in some measure the perfection which has been "shown on the Mount" by Him who is "the Way, the Truth and the Life." They are the only gate through which men can enter if they desire sincerely to walk in the strait "way that leadeth to life."

Finally, the Beatitudes are the dearer to us and we more readily adopt them as the principles of our life, from the fact that the Great Teacher who uttered them made them the principles upon which His own career was shaped, His own life lived. He knew in an eminently practical way the poverty which He Himself sets down as the condition and prime prerequisite of ownership of the Kingdom of Heaven. He mourned and sorrowed as no human heart has ever sorrowed. The last cry from His breaking Heart was the expression of the thirst for justice. He experienced the blessedness of persecution and drank to the dregs the cup of suffering. Thus

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His own example stamps the Beatitudes with a power that no mere human teachings have ever possessed.

If, therefore, we approach in a spirit of faith the mount of the altar we shall find the same Divine Teacher who taught the people in that dawn on the hill in Galilee, teaching us to-day from behind the tabernacle veil the selfsame lessons. With the eyes of the spirit we can see Him in His Sacramental life living over again the years when He preached and wrought wonders in Galilee. With the ears of the soul we can hear the same sweet music of that voice which won all hearts and taught those truths and those lessons which alone ought to form the basis of all spiritual living, and which alone can steady our weak wills in the time of stress and trial. There on the Mount of the Altar He utters to-day to each one of us the same blessings as He did that spring morning by the Lake, when the people thronged to listen. It is only by listening to His voice and obeying His call that there can be any true happiness in our lives now or any beatitude hereafter.

THE FOUNTAIN OF WEALTH

“**B**LESSED are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

In our last Holy Hour we dwelt on some general considerations applicable to all the Beatitudes; we shall now take up the first of these sacred utterances of our Blessed Saviour and draw out in detail its meaning and application. If ever a teacher could claim attention on the score of carrying out in his daily life the lessons taught, surely that teacher is our Divine Master Himself. St. Paul says of Him: “That being rich, He became poor for your sakes; that through His poverty you might be rich.” He whose home was the bosom of the Eternal Father condescended to take up His abode in the dark cattle-shed on Bethlehem’s hillside. During the silent years at Nazareth His hands were hardened and His limbs fatigued by toil in Joseph’s workshop. During His public ministry He said: “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.” The world refused Him the two things that it refuses to no one else, a place to be born and a place to die. “He came unto His own and His own

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received Him not." The doors of the houses in the little town of Judea were closed in His face, and "there was no room for them in the inn." He has a claim, then, to be listened to when He says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

When our Blessed Saviour uttered this benediction, what did He mean? As He looked on that beautiful morning into the faces of those earnest men and women who thronged to hear Him, what was the teaching He wished to convey? Who are "the poor in spirit" to whom is promised "the Kingdom of Heaven"? From this blessing none are excluded. All may gain it. The man willing to work who tramps the streets all day long seeking employment and dizzy from want of food, is surely poor. The father of a family in the cold garret, dying by inches and coughing his life away, listening to the cries of his children for the bread he can not earn for them, knows without doubt the sting of poverty. The brave girl who daily in the crowded subway hurries to the department store, where through the long hours she labors for a paltry pittance which will not pay the rent and buy food and medicine for a sick mother, must certainly be numbered among the poor. For such as these, and their number is

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legion, is the blessing intended. And the blessing will be theirs upon one condition. They must be resigned to their lot. No envy of those who are rich must be allowed to linger in their hearts. No murmuring must escape their lips. But with a childlike confidence they must trust to the words of our Saviour: "Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these."

"This saying is hard, and who can bear it?" Yes, it is hard. It is no easy matter to trust the Heavenly Father for our daily bread when the children are crying for food. When one is deafened by the buzz of the saw in the mill, the clatter of the loom, the jolting of machinery, the harsh whirl of bobbins, it is hard to hear the voice of the Master above it all saying: "Come to Me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you." Yet if the Master's invitation is unheeded, if His plead-

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ing is rejected, then, though in our lives there is poverty, suffering, want and hunger, yet the reward and the blessing cannot be ours, for the spirit of poverty is not there. This spirit of poverty will not be difficult if, without regretting the good things of earth, we remember prayerfully the words of our Lord: "Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in Heaven: where neither the rust nor the moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through and steal." God is not like Dives, who allowed Lazarus to hunger for the crumbs which fell from his table. On the contrary He is full of affection and love for His poor, and if they will only trust Him and keep their hearts at peace and detached, He will bring them to sit clad in the wedding-garment at His own right hand in His Kingdom. Such is His promise: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Even His own Blessed Mother, long years before her Son gave this consoling promise, sang the same to her cousin Elizabeth, when she said: "He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich He hath sent away empty." And no one ever experi-

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enced the truth of these words as fully as did Mary when she chanted them in the hill-country for the first time.

But what of those whose footsteps are not dogged by grinding want? What of those whose homes are bright, where there is no anxiety for the morrow's bread? What of those who never look into the pinched and thin faces of loving children, who never hear the cry for food? Is this promise of "the Kingdom of Heaven" for them? They live in comfortable dwellings surrounded by abundance and even wealth. Their lives are not overshadowed by dark clouds of doubt and uncertainty for the next day's needs. How can they be poor in spirit? How is this poverty of the Gospel compatible with the comfort that surrounds them? For Jesus said to His disciples: "Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And again I say to you: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Are we to believe, then, that the wealthy and they who possess in abundance this world's goods, are excluded from the inheritance of "the poor in spirit"? Surely the Beatitudes are for all. Their application is

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universal. No state of life, no particular class is excluded. The blessings are for those who wish to reach out and take them. Riches, wealth, social position may and do make the attainment of the Kingdom of Heaven more difficult. At the same time, if with these earthly treasures there be associated poverty of spirit and detachment of soul, the blessing will be the more abundant. There must be some way by which the man who lives in the marble palace can reach eternal life, as well as the man who has to struggle to pay rent by the month for narrow and dark quarters. Rightly understood, the rich man who goes to his office in a cushioned automobile can be as "poor in spirit" as the tanned laborer who makes his way to his work on foot or by the trolley. The promised benediction of the Beatitude must be within the power of the lady as well as within the grasp of the poor hard-worked mill-hand or shop girl. The rich gown and the coarse hair-cloth can both in their own way help to the Kingdom of God, if the wearers are influenced by the principles of the Gospel.

We need not be reminded, however, that the practice of poverty of spirit is not as easy in the home of wealth as in the cottage of the poor. Indeed, it is immeasurably more difficult.

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The worldly atmosphere, the flattery, the luxury and extravagance which are so often found in the palaces of wealth; the absence of religious suggestions and the presence of everything which tends to gratify the senses, all unite to attach us inordinately to this earth and its possessions. Compare the daily prayers at sunrise in the home of the poor, with the late and lazy rising of the rich; the devout prints which hang upon the walls of our tenements, with the half nude and suggestive paintings and water colors in gilded frames in the parlors of fashionable society. Contrast the few pious books which are the comfort of hard-working Catholics, with the impure novel and almost obscenely illustrated modern magazines on the centre table and in the libraries of some of the wealthy. Reflect upon the education given to the numerous children of our ordinary Catholics by the devoted nuns who, with almost a mother's love, sacrifice their lives to the work, and compare it with the training given to the offspring—not numerous by any means—of many aspiring wealthy families with ambitious social tendencies—the would-be aristocrats—who for the sake of worldly advancement send their children to non-sectarian institutions. Contrast these and other conditions

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which prevail and it will at once be apparent that the home of the poor is a safer school for Heaven than the home of the rich.

Nevertheless it is not the possession of wealth which excludes from the Kingdom of God. Ownership of this world's goods is not incompatible with poverty of spirit. If riches are acquired dishonestly, or if they are squandered and not used as God intends, then is the right to the Beatitude forfeited. The man who by superior talent, or by successful combination robs the laborer of his wages; the man who sweats the poor and grinds him down to the last farthing that will keep starvation from his family, can lay no claim to poverty of spirit. In the factories and mills it frequently happens that there is more care taken of the looms than there is of the poor girls, the human machines, who guide and direct them. Let there be a screw or rivet or bolt out of place and it is adjusted at once, but let the mill-hand fall at her work and the life-blood ooze from her lungs, she is replaced on the morrow and no thought taken of her going. Surely we cannot say that they who are responsible for this condition are influenced by the spirit of the Beatitudes. It is more in accordance

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with the teachings of the Gospel and with the spirit of Christ to pay a generous or at least a just wage to the sweating puddlers, to the men whose faces scorch and whose bodies burn at the open doors of blast-furnaces, or over caldrons of molten metal, than to grind them down to the last penny and use the ill-gotten wealth, tainted with the life-blood of the workmen, in deeds which tend to vanity and self-glorification. Museums and libraries and monuments of granite and marble do not put bread into the mouths of the hungry and stop the cries of the starving children from whose fathers the ill-gotten gain has been wrung.

But how are riches to be used, when honestly acquired? Riches like health, talent, social position and everything else are gifts from God, and these gifts must be used by men not as independent masters, but as stewards who must give an account to their Lord. Our Blessed Saviour Himself makes it clear in the Gospel in the parable of the talents, that not merely the abuse of wealth but even the failure to use it to good purpose will be punished by exterior darkness. In the same chapter He also draws out the proper use of wealth. Speaking to those upon His right hand at the day of judgment, He will say, giving the rea-

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son for the salvation of the just: "For I was hungry and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in." Then shall the just answer Him, saying: "Lord, when did we see Thee hungry and feed Thee; thirsty and give Thee to drink?" And Christ will answer: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me." If men, while using their wealth for their needs, for their comfort, for their reasonable recreation according to the demands of their state of life, keep their hearts detached and look on their gold and silver as a gift from God—a gift which is only loaned to them to promote the Master's glory and not their own, then surely the promise of the Beatitude will be theirs. If they will feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked and do these works of charity as if doing them to Christ, then "the Kingdom of Heaven" shall be theirs. If, in fine, they would rather sacrifice all the goods of fortune than offend their Creator—the Giver of all good gifts—by a single mortal sin, then surely and then only are they truly "poor in spirit."

There is another class to whom especially the Beatitude applies in its widest sense. They

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are those who are poor in reality not from necessity but from choice, and poor also in spirit. Many, had they wished, could have amassed treasures upon earth. Their prospects were bright, their future attractive, their homes comfortable. They were not like the young man of the Gospel, who, when bidden by our Lord to go sell what he had, give to the poor and follow Him, turned his back upon Christ and "went away sad." Sad too must every soul be that hears the call of the Master and turns from it unheeding.

There have been and are to-day, thank God, tens of thousands of brave men and women who can say with St. Peter: "Behold, we have left all things and followed Thee," knowing full well that "everyone that hath left house and brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting." These by vow give up not only the possession of gold and silver, but also eliminate from their lives the hope of earthly goods and possessions. This they do cheerfully because they love Christ's poor and needy. They would rather be with Him in the cold at Bethlehem, in the sorrow on Olivet and in His nakedness upon

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the cross, than accompany Him in all the radiance of His glory on Mount Thabor.

Moreover, this life they take upon themselves voluntarily in order to minister to Him in the person of His poor, His needy, His little ones. If our Lord will say: "Come ye blessed" to those who have fed the hungry, what will be the reward of those who sacrifice all to feed the starving and famishing souls of men with the doctrine of eternal truth and the Bread of everlasting life! What the gratitude of the Sacred Heart to those who slake the thirst of His soul for the hearts of men! What the recompense of those who hear the cry "I thirst" on the cross and give Him not the vinegar, but the souls for whom He is bleeding His life away. If a cup of cold water given in His name will not be forgotten, what will be His thanks to those who clothe the naked—not merely the ragged and those stripped of the garments of the body—but to those who clothe the souls of men with the robes of grace and with the insignia of sonship! Such are the "poor in spirit" who with loving hearts kneel at His altar and hear the invitation: "Go, sell and give to the poor." It is by giving all that these become rich beyond the telling. Whatever we hoard and keep back when that call

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comes, only makes us the poorer. Yet there are those who will not hear the call and because of earthly goods think themselves rich, "and made wealthy, and have need of nothing," and they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Alas, there are even parents who stand in the way of their children, when in the spring day of their young lives they wish to select this poverty of spirit,—to become poor for the love of the Master who became poor to make them rich.

THE FOUNTAIN OF MEEKNESS

“**B**LESSED are the meek: for they shall possess the land.” We have meditated upon the wealth of those who voluntarily become poor for Christ. We have His word that they are rich beyond telling, who are “poor in spirit” for the sake of Him who “debased Himself, taking the form of a servant.” Now, however, our thoughts turn to the second Beatitude, dearer no doubt to the Sacred Heart than the first, and certainly more difficult to practise in our daily lives.

Moses in the Old Law was the type and figure of our Blessed Saviour in the New. He led the people out of the slavery of Egypt, fed them in the desert, brought them to the borders of Canaan and pointed out to them the Promised Land. In like manner our Blessed Saviour has delivered the people from the slavery of sin and death, has nourished them upon the manna of His own Body and guides them to the promised land of His Heavenly Kingdom. Of that great servant of God in the Old Dispensation Holy Writ says: “Moses was a man exceedingly meek above all men that dwell upon earth.” He was a fitting figure surely of

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Him who was "meek and humble of heart." David, too, in his inspired songs dwells upon the same trait: "The Lord will guide the mild in judgment: He will teach the meek His ways." We cannot wonder that a virtue so dear to the Sacred Heart was selected for a place among the Beatitudes.

What, then, is this meekness of which our Blessed Lord speaks? What is the nature of this virtue which is the prominent trait of that Heart to which no virtue is wanting? Sometimes meekness is confounded with weakness, with a certain gentleness and softness of character. People are thought meek because of a certain insensibility or lack of sensitiveness. There is about them a coarseness of fibre and a certain numbness. Apathy of disposition, natural gentleness and timidity of character resemble Christian meekness, but they are not the virtue of which our Lord speaks.

Those are really meek who are quick to repress all motions of anger, all tendencies which incline us to foster or feel resentment against others who have offended us. The truly meek man controls all inclinations to and all signs of anger, impatience, envy and revenge. This control may be prompted by the fact that such emotions and acts are unreasonable, and then

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we have merely a natural virtue which even pagans practised. Furthermore, our Lord in the Gospel forbids revenge and anger, and because of this condemnation these passions are checked and ordinary Christian virtue is manifested. But if a soul will gladly endure personal offenses and cheerfully bear affronts because our Blessed Saviour was offended and unjustly treated and because the soul desires to resemble her Lord and Master, we have the heroic meekness of which Christ speaks when He says: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land."

This virtue, then, is evidently very far from natural gentleness or apathy. The sublimest acts of meekness are found in the lives of those Saints, who instead of being naturally meek were fiery and aggressive. In fact, the possession and exercise of the virtue blessed by our Divine Saviour is quite compatible with the greatest strength and courage. This we perceive in His own life. Isaias touchingly described Him: "He was offered because it was His will, and He opened not His mouth: He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and He shall not open His mouth." Jeremias also says: "He will give His cheek to him that

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strikereth Him: He shall be filled with reproaches," just as our Lord taught: "To him that striketh thee on the one cheek, offer also the other." Yet this same gentle Master during the first Passover of His public life, when He went up to Jerusalem, was filled with indignation at the defiling of the Temple. "And the Pasch of the Jews was at hand; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the Temple those who sold oxen and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when He had made, as it were, a scourge of little cords, He drove them all out of the Temple, the sheep also and the oxen; and the money of the changers He poured out: and the tables He overthrew. And He said to them that sold doves: Take these things hence: and make not the house of My Father a house of traffic. And the disciples remembered that it was written: The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up." Yet He who wielded the lash "was meek and humble of heart."

Again, who was more fiery, who more aggressive than the Baptist? "And John the Baptist came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching in the desert of Judea the baptism of penance for the remission of sins, saying: Do penance for the Kingdom of

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Heaven is at hand. Prepare ye the way of the Lord: make straight His paths: every valley shall be filled: and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain: and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." When the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism, he denounced them: "Ye brood of vipers, who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruit worthy of penance. For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, that yieldeth not good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire."

No such teacher as John had appeared since the days of the prophets. His face was tanned by the sun, his frame thin and emaciated by the rigor of his penance; his language was as rugged as the hills amid which he had passed his youth. His preaching was in no sleek formalities, but fiery and impetuous. Yet this strong, stern character had won peace, gentleness and mildness by his fierce struggles in the wilderness. The day came when he pointed out the Christ to his disciples and humbly bade them follow a new Master. No rivalry, no jealousy could find place in that submissive soul.

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One day when John was baptizing in Ennon near Salim, the disciples came to John and said to him: "Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou gavest testimony, behold, all men come to Him." John answered: "You yourselves do bear me witness, that I said, I am not Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride, is the bridegroom. But the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above, is above all." Beautiful words! Words full of meekness and gentleness from the lips of him whose words had burnt into the very souls of Priest, and Scribe, and Pharisee.

John, who had shone so brightly, was content that his light should flicker for a time and then die out before the brightening dawn. He who was so rugged and strong was not the Christ, but His messenger: was not the bridegroom, but the bridegroom's friend. His heart was even now gladdened by the music of the bridegroom's voice. Possibly John may have seen in vision, when he spoke these words, the dungeon in the prison of Machærus. He may

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have heard the waters of the Dead Sea singing his requiem as they dashed against the walls of his captivity. He may have known of the hour when to gratify the whim of a dancing girl, his head would be severed from his body at the command of the half-drunken king. Surely, then, meekness is not weakness and is quite compatible with strength and courage. Or, perhaps it is truer to say that meekness in all its fulness and perfection is the virtue of the strong. For its congenial abode is in the souls of spiritual giants.

What has been said of the Baptist is true of the Saints. Those servants of God, over whose souls and lives the wings of peace have brooded, have not been men insensible to the sufferings which fell to their lot. They had their trials and difficulties. Persecutions and injustice were often their share. It is quite true to say of them that the sharp word cut, the insult smarted, bitter and unkind speech hurt, harshness and rudeness pained, and they felt wounded keenly when passed over and forgotten; but the long practice of self-mastery, daily meditation on the meekness of their Saviour on the cross, many hours—too few for their desires—before the throne of unrequited Love, which meekly dwells for us in the Tab-

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ernacle, all those combined to aid them to the calm endurance of insult and injury. Exercises such as these enabled them to turn with joy the left cheek to the blow, though the right was flushed red and bore the finger-marks of the striker.

Meekness is no badge of effeminate piety; it grows in the souls of spiritually strong men and women. It will rise to heights of virtue, where mere natural courage will grow dizzy and fall. By its practice a man may grow to the cheerful forgiveness of injuries, the habitual refusal of opportunities for revenge and self-vindication. To these lofty altitudes it will be almost impossible for mere natural virtue to point the way.

The practice of this Beatitude is no easy task. It requires no slight effort, no transitory striving in the spiritual life. To show forth in our daily lives meekness and gentleness demands a greater and more constant endeavor than does the poverty of spirit about which so much has been said in the preceding chapter. Poverty of spirit, as we know, calls for a spirit of detachment from wealth, a separation in affection from earthly riches. For the man of robust faith—to whom the treasures of grace and the wealth of the spiritual world are a

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reality—as real to his spiritual vision as the gold of the Klondike is to the miner who is washing the yellow grains from the pans, it is possible and at times, by God's grace, easy to prefer the eternal riches. But in the second Beatitude there is question not of a separation from eternal goods, but of a separation from self. It is more difficult to divest ourselves of self, than it is to sacrifice money or lessen our bank balance. It cuts deeper to set aside that which is part of us, which, like self-love, enters into our very being, than it does to deprive ourselves of the love or possession of outward goods. These latter make our years more agreeable, but they do not enter into the web and woof of our being. They are not, so to speak, a part of a man's soul. The fulfilment of the second Beatitude entails the sacrifice of self, which must be made if we are to receive the blessing pronounced by the lips of our Divine Master.

Was it because this meekness is so hard for human nature that our Lord left us such an example of it in His life and to-day lives for our love a life of meekness in His Tabernacle? "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart," could have been a challenge flung in the face of the Scribe and Pharisee; and who

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of them could have denied it? A glance at His public life and the story of His death prove it. Then, too, we were His enemies, the hand-writing on the wall was written against us. Did He crush us? Did He cry out for justice? Did He overwhelm us in His anger? Yes; He did overwhelm us but it was with evidences of His love and gentleness. He is the Father of the returning prodigal, and He makes us His sons. He has ever yearned and tried to conquer our rebellious hearts, not by fear, not by intimidation, but by a tenderness gentler than a mother's love.

In His Eucharistic Life He displays the same meekness. We stay away, and with outstretched hands He pleads for our return. "Come to Me all you that labor," He whispers to our souls. We forget Him, yet He waits meekly till we turn to Him. We offend Him and are rude towards Him, yet how forgiving and gentle and how warm the welcome when we come back! Could we see the face, could we hear the voice, could we but catch a glimpse of those eyes, the meek Saviour in His Altar-home would be the magnet for our souls.

Lastly, what of the promise made to the meek? "They shall possess the land!" The land which our Lord promises in

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this Beatitude cannot surely refer to earthly goods and transitory possessions in this world. These frequently do not belong to the meek. Advantage is often taken of that very meekness to deprive them of their just right. They are often the object of persecution and injustice, and they suffer both for Christ's sake. The land they are to possess is not the riches of earth. The practice of the first Beatitude for many consists in giving up temporal goods for eternal. The land that the meek shall possess is the land of their own heart, the land of their own souls, inasmuch as the virtue of meekness insures them a peace and quiet of soul which "surpasseth all understanding." By this virtue the very sources of many temptations which destroy calmness of spirit, are cut out of their lives.

Those who practise this supernatural meekness are like the great stone lighthouses, that are built out towards the sea, in our harbors. Massive granite blocks are laid deep in cement and knit together into one solid mass. Little by little these stone foundations rise till they tower far above the level of the tides and the highest reach of the waves in the wildest storms. The winds blow, the waves pound, the storm rages angrily and the water beats

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fiercely against the heavy solid granite foundation, only to rush back defeated and to return once more bootlessly to the attack. In the lighthouse there is no shiver or alarm, but only a feeling of security, while the line of light reaches without a tremor out to sea, to guide the sailor on the darkest night. So the meek build up a solid foundation of unselfishness, of love for the meek Master. No storm of passion can disturb the peace of their souls, and the light of their example goes out into darkened lives and storm-tossed hearts to guide them to the only port of safety, the Heart of Christ. As a consequence they shall also possess that other land, the land of the Kingdom of God which they merit by their brave and heroic lives. The reward of the meek is peace on earth and the possession of the eternal Kingdom of God, where our Blessed Saviour "the Prince of Peace" reigns forever and ever.

THE FOUNTAIN OF SOLACE

TO-DAY, in our Holy Hour under the light of the sanctuary lamp, in the quiet near the altar, we are to dwell upon a most consoling promise—a law of hope and consolation—“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted”—a promise of light after darkness, of joy following upon sorrow, when tears shall be replaced by smiles. That such should be the law can be no matter of surprise when we bear in mind that He is the Law-giver who said: “Come to Me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you.” He gave the consoling promise of whom it is written: “The bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not quench.” And in another place the prophet speaks of His tenderness: “I will seek that which was lost: and that which was driven away I will bring again; and I will bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was weak.” Can we wonder, then, that sorrow and mourning should find from His lips the hope of comfort and consolation?

Moreover, our Blessed Lord in His own life was no stranger to sorrow. He was, as Holy

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Writ says, the Man of sorrows. It were a serious mistake to fancy that the shadow of suffering and mourning hung over our Saviour's soul only at particular periods or on special occasions. It is true, without doubt, that as Calvary grew nearer and the vision of shame was merging into the reality, as "His soul grew sorrowful even unto death," He gave evidence of the grief which flooded His soul. But from the first instant when He was cradled in His Mother's bosom, sorrow hung over His spirit and mourning saddened His Sacred Heart. The vision of sin and ingratitude and the sight of the uplifted cross were with Him at Bethlehem, and in Egypt and Galilee, and through all His growing years. So it can be no matter of wonder if He blesses those who strive to drink of the same chalice.

But of what sorrow and mourning is there question in this Beatitude? Is every sadness to be comforted? Is every tear to be wiped away and every burdened heart and afflicted spirit relieved? There is a twofold mourning, a twofold grief. There is "the sorrow of the world," which St. Paul says "worketh death"; and there is "the sorrow that is according to God," and this "worketh penance steadfast unto salvation." There is the sorrow which is

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of the earth, earthy, and that which is of the spirit, spiritual. There is the sorrow which beats us to earth and the sorrow which raises us up to Heaven. To this latter the comfort is promised.

During the public ministry of our Lord, when He had been preaching to the people, it came to pass that Jesus departed from Galilee, and came into Judea beyond the Jordan. And behold one came and said to Him: "Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?" When our Blessed Saviour bade him keep the commandments, "the young man said to Him: All these have I kept from my youth, what is yet wanting to me? Jesus saith to him: If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven; and come, follow Me. And when the young man had heard this word he went away sad; for he had great possessions." Here we have a sadness of the world, a sadness which is not of God, a sadness to which the comfort of the Beatitudes has not been promised, a sadness whose ending is apt to be death. For can there be joy and life in the heart of him who turns his back upon Christ?

On another occasion "one of the Pharisees



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desired Him to eat with him. And He went into the house of the Pharisee, and sat down to meat. And behold a woman that was in the city, a sinner, when she knew that He was at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment; and standing behind at His feet, she began to wash His feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment." Here we have a sorrow which is of the spirit, which is of God, a sorrow which touches the Heart of Christ and wins comfort and pardon. This is the mourning which shall be comforted. Every tear shed for sin at the feet of the Master shall be changed into a smile of joy in His Kingdom. Every sigh of repentance shall be turned into a song of thanksgiving before His throne. Mary Magdalene had wandered far in the ways of sin. She had forgotten the quiet, happy days at the home in Bethany. Her soul had been soiled and stained by deeds of shame. But the time came when she saw the face of the Master in Galilee. Her heart was touched, and flinging herself at His feet she mourned over the past and was comforted with the comfort which none but the Sacred Heart can give.

Who can tell the consolation Magdalene re-

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ceived at the feet of our Blessed Saviour? There she first found forgiveness. There she flung herself in her grief when our Lord came from beyond the Jordan to bid her brother arise from the tomb of death. At the foot of the cross near those poor bleeding feet, she stood for three hours looking up into His face through the dim light on Calvary and in all the brightness of the Resurrection she cast herself at His feet on Easter morning and whispered with loving lips, "Rabboni." So must it be with every sin-stricken soul. There is only one source of comfort when the sense of sin is upon us. There is only one place whence light can come into our darkened spirit, whence joy can come in our sorrows, strength in our weakness, courage in our cowardice: at the feet of the Master in the Tabernacle of His love, where He ever dwells to welcome us back again no matter how far away we have wandered. There He will change our mourning into gladness.

When the Child Jesus was twelve years of age He went "up into Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast." After the time of the festival, his parents "came a day's journey, and sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And not finding Him, they re-

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turned to Jerusalem seeking Him." At last after three days they found Him in the Temple, and Mary said to Him: "Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." Here, too, is a sorrow "according to God." No tongue can tell the depth of Mary's grief. Great was the sorrow of that Mother when she fled with hurrying feet through the hill country and on out over the desert to the shore of the far-away Nile. Great and deep was her sorrow when she stood at the foot of the cross and looked up into the white face of her dead Child. But in these moments and hours of grief her Child was with her; on the other hand, when she sought Him sorrowing for three days in the crowded streets of Jerusalem, her Child was absent, He had for a while gone out of her life. But with what love He consoled His heart-broken mother, for "He went down to Nazareth, and was subject to them." For eighteen long years amid the quiet of the Galilean Hills, He was to repay her for the sorrows of those three days of loneliness.

Into our own lives a similar desolation enters at times. We want to be faithful and true to our Blessed Saviour. We long to be more intimate with Him in prayer, in Holy Communion. We yearn to labor and toil for Him

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and for the souls for whom He died. Yet we feel that He has gone out of our lives. Our prayers seem to be unanswered, though we know they are never unheard; no cry has ever gone up from human heart that our Lord has not heard. Again, at times we cannot pray. We seem scarcely to believe the most consoling mystery of our faith. To toil on and work at our daily duties is so hard and monotonous. It is hard at the mill behind the loom. It is hard to go faithfully through the daily routine in our office, and household duties are such a drudgery. In the stores where we work, our feet are tied and our brains are dizzy and our eyes burn. How easy it would all become, if we could be sure that the Master loved us! Did He love Mary less because He left her for three days? So we too must do as Mary did, seek "Him sorrowing" by contrition for our sins; "in the Temple," by prayer; "among the doctors," by spiritual reading. We must seek Him by renewed acts of faith, by the brave fulfilment of each duty for His love, by being most loyal to His least inspiration, and soon the clouds will break, the shadows decline, the day dawn and the Master will enter into our hearts perceptibly again though He has never been absent from them. Our mourn-

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ing will be past and our joy and comfort will be at hand. Surely that sorrow and mourning which bring the joy and comfort of His Presence into our souls will be a blessing indeed.

When our Lord, laden with the cross, was on the way to Calvary, "there followed Him a great multitude of people and of women who bewailed and lamented Him." And when He was raised upon the cross and hung in His agony, "there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." In these two instances we have mourning and sorrow which shall be comforted. We have here the great sorrow of the Church which is renewed daily at the dawn upon hundreds and thousands of altars. All the holy Sacraments are the channels through which the Precious Blood flows into our parched souls. All the wounds of the martyrs are only shadows of the blood-shedding on Golgotha and the outward expressions of their sorrow for the shame and suffering of their Saviour.

Happy shall we be if we stand with the weeping mother at the foot of the cross. Thabor is beautiful and consoling, but Calvary is better for us. It is more helpful to look into the Master's sweet face, blood-stained and

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soiled and bruised with cruel blows, than it is to gaze upon that countenance lit with the light of the beatific vision. When our hearts are sorest, our spirits darkest, our burdens heaviest, up the slope of Golgotha we must climb and we shall hear our dying Lord telling us that He thirsts for our souls. Can any comfort in our mourning be like unto this? Though the world does not want us, though others abandon us, He will fold us to His Sacred Heart and through Calvary lead us to the Thabor of His Kingdom.

There are other reasons for mourning which we have not time to consider. A constant object of sorrow and regret can ever be our own and others' sins. Our own forgetfulness and ingratitude were ever a pain to the Sacred Heart. A keen and delicate sensitiveness to the insults and injuries and indelicacies offered to our Blessed Saviour has ever been a characteristic of the Associates of the League. And the spirit of reparation which ought to be so deep in our hearts and so dear to each of us, is only a warm expression of how the thought of this unkindness to the Master stings and pains us.

Then again to feel keenly the season of spiritual dryness which our Lord permits or

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which we by our infidelities bring upon ourselves, is a mourning which our Lord will bless. Such grief at the withdrawal of visible helps and graces is no sign of a soft and sentimental piety, any more than was the sorrow of Mary during the dark day when she sought Him in Jerusalem. If this privation lends strength to our efforts to seek Him by more prayer, no matter how distasteful it may be, if it urges us on to an increase of self-conquest and restraint, then surely our sorrow will soon be changed into joy, our tears to smiles. And piety of this kind is vigorous and robust and rings true to every test of solid virtue.

Lastly it were a wrong view of the Heart of our Blessed Saviour to fancy that the promise of comfort is restricted to sorrow and mourning which touch only our spiritual ills and needs. It is ever to be borne in mind that there is no least detail, no slightest circumstance of our lives which is not of deep concern to His loving Heart. His sympathy is at this hour just as deep and as real for us in our troubles and our pains, as it was for those who years ago brought to Him their sick and infirm on the lake-shore or on the hills of Galilee. The same healing is in His touch as there was when He laid His white hands on the lepers

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in Samaria. To the blind whose spiritual vision is dark, He will give sight, just as surely as He healed Bartimæus outside Jericho's gates. To the poor heart-broken father who looks into the face of his dead child, as Jairus did, He will give an assurance that the child shall have a life not bounded by the grave and ended at the tomb. To the poor mother weeping at the grave of her child—the staff of her declining years—as the widow of Naim wept over her strong son, He gives comfort in the promise that He is “the Resurrection and the Life,” and that she shall see and embrace her child in a land where there is no parting and all tears are wiped away. To those who must labor till limbs are tired and the brain is dizzy, who must toil till hands harden and faces are tanned, who work long hours for small compensation, and whose prospects for themselves and those dear to them seem bleak and hopeless; to those into whose lives sorrow and pain and disappointment in one form or another must enter, if they accept their lot with resignation, as coming from the hand of an all-loving Father, to these, I say, is the promise: “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

THE FOUNTAIN OF JUSTICE

SHORTLY after the Passover, in the first spring of His public life, our Lord was going from the Holy City through Samaria to Galilee. The walk that day had been long and fatiguing. It was over the road He had gone when as a Boy of twelve years He had accompanied Mary and Joseph on their yearly visit to the Temple. This same road His mother traversed when she returned to Jerusalem to seek Him sorrowing for three days. With these and other memories in His mind, our Lord reached Sichar at noon. Already "the Disciples were gone into the city to buy meats," and "Jesus being wearied with His journey sat thus on the well." How touching to know that He who had traveled from the eternal years, unwearied and without complaint, should have been tired that day near the well in Samaria. Yes, He was tired and footsore from the journey and the dust and heat, but He is never wearied in His quest for souls.

Looking down into the clear water which sparkled beyond His reach in the well under the noonday sun, our Lord said to the Samaritan woman who was drawing water, and for

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whose soul His Sacred Heart yearned: "Who-soever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but he that shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall not thirst forever. But the water that I shall give him shall become to him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting." May not our Lord have had in His mind on this occasion the hunger and thirst for justice of which He spoke later when unfolding the Beatitudes? Without doubt His physical thirst for the crystal water below, and His spiritual thirst for the soul of the unfortunate Samaritan, reminded Him of the longing and yearning after justice, which His Sacred Heart desires to communicate so fully to the hearts of men and which He blessed on the mountain in Galilee. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill."

What is this hunger and thirst after justice? In our Holy Hour last month we saw that there was a twofold mourning—a sorrow which is of earth and a sorrow which is of Heaven; a sorrow of the flesh and a sorrow of the spirit; a sorrow which worketh death and a sorrow unto life, as St. Paul says. So also there is a twofold hunger and thirst. There is a hunger and thirst for that which fades and shrivels

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up, for what dies and corrupts. And there is a hunger and thirst for what lasts and endures, for what lives and will never die. There is a hunger and thirst unto death and a hunger and thirst unto life. It is evidently of this latter our Lord speaks when He says that they shall have their fill who hunger and thirst after justice.

The word justice is often used to signify one of the cardinal virtues—a companion of prudence and temperance—its sense, however, in the Beatitude is not thus restricted; it is quite unlimited. Justice here, as our Lord uses the term, implies the possession of many virtues. It can, in this instance, be taken in the meaning of perfection, holiness of life or sanctity. Our Lord Himself uses the word somewhat in this meaning later in the same "Sermon on the Mount," in which He promulgates the Beatitudes. "Unless your justice," He says, "abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Here He is rebuking the Pharisees for remaining content with the mere exterior practice of virtue and for being satisfied with only legal formalities. He urges His hearers to the acquisition and practice of interior holiness and sanctity of life. This latter is the

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soul, the life, and without it exterior acts are dead and devoid of merit. Our Divine Saviour in this law of the New Dispensation blesses those who foster in their hearts holy longings and desires for perfection and sanctity. He promises that these desires and longings shall not be in vain. They shall realize as Mary realized so fully that "the Lord has filled the hungry with good things."

There is, then, a hunger that will never be appeased, a thirst that will never be slaked. There is a food, of which if men eat, they hunger the more and starve; a food upon which if they strive to nourish their souls, they shall be as dead in spirit as the Irish peasant was in body in the awful days of the famine, when men and women lay dead by the roadside and in the ditches. "He that drinketh of this water," said our Lord, "shall thirst again."

How true these words are in the case of those who try to feed their souls upon the bread that perishes! Our Blessed Saviour, before promising the Jews on the lakeshore the great gift of His Body and Blood, told them: "Your fathers did eat manna in the desert and are dead"; so are they hungering and famishing, like the poor Prodigal who would fain

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satisfy his craving for food on the husks which the swine did eat. They are as dead in spirit as the Jews were in body whose bones bleached in the sunshine on the sands of the desert. Witness the life of those who hunger and thirst for the world's honors and pleasures. Some will sacrifice their health, their money, their time, even their children's innocence to have their names in the Society columns of the daily papers. They are spiritually dead and are looking for life among dead men's bones. Study the hunger and thirst in the souls of those who look for food in a life of pleasure. They quaff the purple wine, trip to the merry dance under the glare of electric lights to the sensual strains of earthly music. They eat, drink and make merry as if life were mere play, a giddy pastime, a long holiday for sensual indulgence. Are they content, are they satisfied? How true it ever is that "the eye is not filled with seeing, neither is the ear satisfied with hearing," nor is the human heart at rest save in God! How empty their souls! How hollow their lives! There is food and nourishment all about them; seeing it not they die of starvation and famine.

The possession of earthly gratifications can never satisfy, sensual enjoyments can never

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appease the appetite. Possession only reveals the emptiness of those gratifications, and not finding the happiness hoped for the deluded victim is stimulated to the pursuit of ever fleeting phantoms. Earthly pleasures and fading honors, unless sought for with a view to God, are like the flowers of the fall: they fade, wither, are nipped by the frost and die. They are like the glittering soap-bubble, which sparkles with myriad rainbow colors under the sunlight, then bursting, leaves only a damp spot in the hand. The cry which was wrung out from the heart of Wolsey in the day of his downfall: "Had I but served my God with half the zeal I served my king, He would not in mine age have left me naked to mine enemies," this cry will break out from the lips of every man and woman who tries to appease the hunger and thirst of the human soul by feasting upon "the bread that perisheth," by looking for happiness in joys which die and honors which fade. We may, of course, seek the pleasures of the world, we may strive to advance our social position, we may endeavor to increase our store of treasures and wealth, but it is infinitely better to die unhonored and unsung, to die poor and wretched, than in the struggle for these fleeting advantages to taint

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and tarnish our immortal souls by the blemish of the slightest sin.

Let us now turn our thoughts to the hunger and thirst after justice, the hunger and thirst unto life and salvation upon which our Lord pronounced His blessing. It was to this our Blessed Saviour alluded when He said to the Samaritan woman: "He that shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall not thirst forever." This hunger and thirst consists, as has been said, in a longing and yearning of the soul for perfection and holy living. It is an ardent desire for spiritual things and for the increase of God's glory and God's interests. Its presence in the soul is manifested by a gradually increasing relish for the spiritual life and imperceptibly there springs up in the heart a disrelish for purely earthly pleasures and gratifications. Once we have tasted and seen "how sweet the Lord is," the gratifications of sense and the vanities of the world cloy and pall, they become insipid and even loathsome. This hunger and thirst produces a foretaste of the satisfaction to which the psalmist alludes when he sings: "I shall be fully satisfied when I see Thee in Thy glory." Already the soul begins to realize the promise: "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house." In

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this sense, then, they who "hunger and thirst after justice shall have their fill."

This hunger and thirst after justice, these holy desires and these ardent longings for perfection, this cry that comes out from the lips of devout lovers of the Sacred Heart: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God," seem to produce upon the soul a contradictory effect. At the same time the longings and desires quiet and arouse, appease and stimulate the spiritual appetite, the supernatural tendencies. The very excellence of the spiritual world satiates the hunger and excites a yearning for its possession; it quenches and at the same moment awakens the thirst. But it is the characteristic of this hunger for the things of God that it is not like the hunger of the body which weakens, enfeebles and starves; on the contrary, it strengthens, invigorates and increases our supernatural life. This spiritual hunger leaves no void, no pain, but gives pleasure, satiety and consolation.

In our Blessed Lord's life we have many instances which show the hunger and thirst which dwelt in His Sacred Heart. One day "when great multitudes stood about Him, so that they trod one upon another," He said to



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the crowds that were eagerly looking up into His face and hanging on His words: "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?" Here we catch a glimpse of the hunger and thirst which were consuming the Heart of Christ. On the same occasion He said: "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?" He could see the cross looming up before His eyes long before it stood silhouetted against the dark clouds which hung over Calvary on the first Good Friday afternoon. How He yearned and "desired with desire" for the hour when His life's blood would ooze out through the five wounds! Again, when the wished-for hour had come and He hung dying on the cross, almost the last cry which came from His lips was: "I thirst." He thirsted, with a suffering far keener than His physical thirst, for souls. His mind went back and forward through all the centuries and generations of men, and that day He yearned for them.

We, too, must cultivate these holy desires for the spiritual life and for spiritual things. Above all we must look forward with a hunger and thirst towards our Holy Communions. Just as on the last day of His mortal life He

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told His Apostles that He “desired with desire to eat the Pasch” with them, so now He longs to have us come to the Holy Table to the Pasch of the New Law. In Galilee He met them on the shore and in tones of loving affection bade them after their night of toil, “Come and dine”; so He longs to have us daily dine with Him at His altar. To this we must look forward, this Banquet we must desire, for this we must daily prepare our hearts by purer lives, more generous deeds, and by increasing the hunger and thirst for His Body and Blood. This daily Banquet will make the pleasures of earth cloy, it will fill our souls with strength and joy past telling, and it will excite in us the keenest and the sweetest longing to sit down at the table of the Lamb in the land of the living.

THE FOUNTAIN OF PURITY

LONG centuries before the lips of our Blessed Saviour proclaimed from the Galilean hill: "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God," the inspired Psalmist had sung of a similar reward for the pure of heart. "Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord?" the holy bard had asked; "or who shall stand in His holy place?" "The innocent in hands and clean of heart" was the consoling reply.

Every principle and every lesson inculcated by our Lord on the Mount of the Beatitudes was reproduced in His daily life and practice. He asks us to do nothing which He Himself has not done; He invites us to go only where He Himself leads the way. He wins our following, not by words and pleadings only, but by the stronger language of example. Never was there a fuller spirit of poverty than that which was in the bosom of the Babe of Bethlehem, or in the Heart of the Man-God hanging on the cross. In the world's history no deeper mourning has ever hung over human soul, than that which brooded over the soul of Christ in the moon-lit garden of Gethsemani.

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His meekness and gentleness in the time of His Passion have through the ages extinguished the fires of anger and revenge in countless souls. During the sacred days of His tarrying among men His ways were marked not merely by justice, but by a kindness, mercy and love more tender and more gentle than that of a mother towards her children. If, then, we wish to see in all its fulness and beauty the purity of heart, the reward of which in our Lord's own words, is the vision of God, we must study it in the Sacred Heart of our Blessed Saviour Himself.

The first degree of purity of which our Lord is our model, a purity absolutely necessary even for salvation, consists in freedom from sin. Sin taints, soils, blights and kills the soul. There can be no vision of the Father's face in the soul where a serious offence against God dwells. From the first instant of our Lord's conception, from the moment when the human soul of Christ was united to His body, both were anointed by the outpouring of the unction of the Divinity and permeated by the dazzling sanctity of the Godhead. The human nature of Christ was assumed by the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity; so that any blemish of sin was an impossibility, it would

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have been a taint of sin upon the Godhead Itself. The uncreated holiness of God elevated, dedicated and consecrated the Heart of our Blessed Saviour, so that it was the very Heart of God Himself. There could be no union of light and darkness, of Divine beauty and sinful deformity. There could be no shadow of sin in Him who is the All Holy One of God.

One day, shortly before His Passion, our Lord was preaching in the porch of the Temple. The people, who still followed and loved Him, had crowded with eagerness to listen to His teaching. Once more the jealousy and hatred of Priest and Scribe and Pharisee had been aroused, and these strove, as was their wont, to entrap Him in His speech. Finally our Lord, looking down into the depths of their hypocritical souls, said to them: "But if I say the truth you believe Me not. Which of you shall convince Me of sin?" Here was a challenge that they dare not accept, a challenge which no lips could utter with truth in all its fulness, save the lips of the Master. Convince Him of sin? Impossible! He was the spotless Lamb of God who was to take away the sins of the world. On Him were laid the iniquities and transgressions of us all, but upon His soul there was not and could not be the

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slightest taint or blemish. His holiness was purer and whiter than the driven snow on Lebanon, clearer than the spotless foam which breaks on the shore of the ocean.

Mary's soul, and it is a joy to know it, was sinless and without stain. But even she could not challenge the Jews by an appeal to sinlessness like her Divine Son's. Mary was sinless by His gracious gift, by the power of His blood, by the merits of His sufferings applied to her long ages before the head which had rested lovingly upon her bosom was crowned with thorns, before His hands were dug by the nails and His side by the spear. He was sinless by no gracious gift, but by Divine right; He was sinless by His very nature, for He was the All Holy God.

This Beatitude requires more than freedom from all serious sins and grievous offences which destroy the life of the soul. St. Paul tells us that our hearts are temples of the Holy Ghost. Our Lord Himself implies that they are dwelling-places of the Most High. "If any man," He said, "love me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him." If then the Holy Trinity is to dwell within our souls, it is surely not sufficient to

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remove objects only which are grossly offensive; our hearts must be furnished in a manner pleasing to our Divine Guest. The Sacred Heart, therefore, in its absolute sinlessness must be our model in the removal of every stain of sin which even in the slightest degree can sully and blemish our souls. How much our Lord desires this purity of His living temples He has shown us by His action in casting out the buyers and sellers from the material Temple on Mount Moriah in the early days of His ministry.

The purity of the Sacred Heart consists in more than freedom from any the slightest shadow of sin. Such a perfection were in a certain sense only negative. In that Heart is the sanctity of the Godhead. The actual graces which poured down into our Lord's soul were more numerous than rain-drops which quench the thirst of the parched soil in spring time, more numerous than the white sands which line the seashore. The streams of sanctifying grace which flowed into the Sacred Heart were like an ocean without limits, whose unfathomable depths no plummet can sound, like a sea without shore and a world without end. This holiness manifested itself in the singleness of purpose which animated His whole life, in the

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desire for the Father's glory which permeated His every act, as the thread runs through the cloth. This was the one aim, the one purpose for which He lived and died—the glory of the Father.

No mystery of His life from the manger to the cross, from Bethlehem to Calvary, no least detail, no slightest circumstance of that life had aught else for its aim but the glory of the Father. Every thought of His mind, every deed of His hands, every word from His lips, every desire of His Heart was in obedience to His Father's will. Our Blessed Saviour Himself said: "I seek not My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." And on another occasion: "I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." And again: "I do always the things that please Him."

On the last night of His mortal career when His life-blood was oozing from the pores of His Body, and the vision of sin was filling His soul with fear and sadness and sorrow so heavy that death was brought quite near the Master; at that awful moment of darkness and desolation, the one wish that welled up from the Sacred Heart, the one cry which was wrung from His lips was a cry to the Father:

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“Not My will but Thine be done.” Whether then we look at our Blessed Saviour, in the tender years of childhood, or in the upgrowing years at Nazareth, whether we are with Him curing the leper, or pardoning the sinner or feeding the multitude by the lake, or see Him in all the shame and ignominy of the cross, there is ever only one purpose to be accomplished, one aim to be fulfilled, one object to be procured—the glory of the Father.

So also must we, like the Master, grow in purity of heart, grow daily in sanctifying grace, that precious ornament of the soul which makes us dear to God and partakers of His very Divine nature and which is the seed of our future glory. We must grow in purity of heart by correspondence to the numberless actual graces which are ceaselessly inundating our souls. These graces are in the spiritual order quite as numerous as the throbs of our poor weary hearts in the natural. They roll in upon our spirits as constantly as the waves of the ocean roll upon the white beach. They come in every form and at every hour. Sometimes they are with us, when in prayer and on our knees; at other times in the midst of the busy distractions of life, when we are alert and keen about worldly affairs. There are graces

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in sorrow that come like cooling shadows over our souls, graces in joy that make the joy pure and holy ; graces when God seems to play upon the soul as a skilled musician plays upon a delicate instrument, and if we correspond the sweetest harmony will go up to the throne of God. We are immersed in grace, as we are in the atmosphere which surrounds us and which we breathe.

Lastly, we must grow in purity of heart by the practice of singleness of purpose in life. We are made for God and our restless hearts will be at peace only in Him. The needle of the compass does not turn to the north as surely as the human heart should turn to God. Yet how hard it is to cultivate constantly this purity of intention. The love of temporal things and worldly pleasures gives us a disrelish for the things of God and excites a craving for earthly gratification. Human respect, the fear of the world's opinion or the inordinate desire of its esteem makes cowards of the bravest. Useless thoughts, superfluous cares, social aspirations absorb us and we have no time for the interests of the Heart of Christ. Needless anxieties, daily impatience, self-will, undue seeking of sensible devotion, these and other too frequent defects blind us to the one

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grand aim which should influence us and so the glory of God and purity of soul suffer. What are we to do? We need so much light, we are weak and require more strength. Both are waiting for us within the Tabernacle under the light of the sanctuary lamp. The disciples at Emmaus knew Him in the breaking of the bread and "in the same hour" they went back to Jerusalem. So we must get the light and the courage from the breaking of the bread at the altar-rail. Then our minds shall be illuminated and our wills strengthened for this daily practice of purity of intention.

"For they shall see God." There is a vision of God in time and a vision of God in eternity—a vision on earth and a vision in Heaven. Both are promised in this Beatitude to the clean of heart. In this world the clean of heart see Him in the visible things round about them. The visible things, as St. Paul says, lead on to the knowledge of the invisible. Created beauty, pleasure, riches and honors lift the pure of heart to the uncreated beauty, sweetness, wealth and glory of the Creator. All things here below that allure and attract are in their eyes but little rivulets flowing out from the great ocean of God's Infinite Perfection, and thus they see God. Again in all the details of

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their lives they perceive and embrace lovingly the action of God's Providence. The feeding of the swallows of the air and the clothing of the lilies of the field is no unmeaning fact to them, but full of the deepest significance. With the most child-like confidence they rest affectionately in the Heavenly Father's arms and look trustingly into His face and see there unmistakable evidences of love.

Moreover, deep in their souls the clean of heart see God. Every truth of His grace they feel, every light from above that flashes into their minds they perceive. No whisper of the Holy Spirit is too low, no call too gentle, no impulse too soft; they heed and respond generously and at once. These see God in their conscience. They recognize His right to command, His title and claim to their obedience. They acknowledge the force and sanction of His law. It is clear to them that when He speaks, all else must listen; when He requires obedience, His will must be fulfilled, His commandments observed. Thus it is that the clean of heart see God not only in the visible creation, not only in the action of His Providence, but within their own conscience, within their own hearts and souls.

Lastly there is the vision of God in His own

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Kingdom, when we shall see Him face to face. Of this blessed vision St. Paul says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." The joys of the "clean of heart" on earth are very deep. Their joy in the beauty of God's works on earth, their joy in submitting to His guidance in each detail of life, their joy in prayer and before the altar near the Tabernacle, all these are at times very real and very full in their prayerful lives, but Heaven is the crown of them all. This they realize at times and bring home to themselves with a certainty and distinctness perceived only by the pure of heart in their strong and living faith. Never is that vision so clear and sure as when they kneel under the light of the sanctuary lamp, and it sometimes seems as if faith by which we see obscurely as it were through a dark glass were changing into the vision when we shall see Him as He is in the Kingdom of His love.

THE FOUNTAIN OF MERCY

ST. PAUL, wishing to win the hearts of the Ephesians to the love of their Creator, singles out the attribute of mercy from among God's infinite perfections when he says: "But God (who is rich in mercy) . . . hath quickened us together in Christ." God is infinite in all His perfections, and yet St. Paul in his chains at Rome, lingered lovingly upon this divine attribute which manifests itself more in His dealings with men. So it cannot be a matter of surprise if in the New Law there is a special blessing attached to its practice. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

On the eve of His Passion, when our Lord was speaking to His Apostles in words of melting tenderness, Philip interrupting said to Him: "Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us." Jesus answered: "Philip, he that seeth Me seeth the Father also." This is especially true of the Mission of the Son. The Father "is rich in mercy," and our Blessed Saviour lavished the riches among men, and now in the Beatitude He bids us also be prodigal of mercy.

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His life on earth was a life of mercy, tenderness and love. He will come at the last day in judgment and justice, but His first coming, when He clothed Himself with our humanity, was an act of supreme mercy. He came on the first Christmas night as a child, to call forth the tenderest instincts of our hearts. He made Himself a fugitive from Herod, to appeal to our compassion. The trade of a lowly artisan He exercised, to win our familiarity. Almost every incident and every detail of His public life is a proof that He "desired mercy and not sacrifice."

At His coming it was no longer the God of Sinai in the lightning and thunder; the God who opened the heavens' floodgates in His anger, or poured out fire on the guilty cities of the plain; no longer the God of Israel who slew the people in His wrath because of David's sin, but it was a God of mercy, a Saviour reconciling man to his Creator by the shedding of His Blood. It was a Saviour who walked with men, taking little children to His Heart to bless them, seeking out the sick and afflicted, multiplying bread for those who hungered, pouring balm into every wound of body and mind, and even raising the very dead from their graves in kindness and mercy. He was a

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Saviour who had only words of gentleness and pardon for repentant sinners, and who seemed to hold the power of grace and nature in the hollow of His hands, at the service of all who chose to make appeal to Him. "And now, ye inhabitants of Jerusalem and ye men of Juda, judge between Me and My vineyard, what is there that I ought to do for My vineyard that I have not done?" How dear then to the Sacred Heart, which, too, "is rich in mercy," must be this consoling Beatitude!

On Tuesday of Holy Week, our Lord, sitting on Mount Olivet, described the last judgment to His Apostles. "Then shall the King say to them that shall be on His right hand: 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, . . . For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in; naked, and you covered Me; sick, and you visited Me.' . . . Then shall the just answer Him, saying: 'Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, and fed Thee; thirsty and gave Thee to drink?' . . . And the King answering, shall say to them: 'Amen, I say to you, so long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me.'" Here we have from the lips of our Blessed Saviour Himself an explanation simple and

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clear, of the nature of the mercy to which is attached the promise of the Beatitude. It may be described as a sympathy or compassion for the sufferings, ills and misfortunes of others, and a practical desire to afford them all the help in our power. This sympathy is to be felt for them and given not merely from natural motives—these are not to be underestimated—but for supernatural reasons, because they are Christ's poor, Christ's needy, Christ's suffering members. How our Lord exercised this mercy in the days of His mortal life has already been indicated and we need not repeat with what loving kindness He healed every ill of the body and soul. The story of the leper and of blind Bartimæus attest His charity for those afflicted with corporal infirmities. Mary Magdalene's pardon and the forgiveness of the poor woman taken in her sin show the compassion of the Sacred Heart for the sin-stained and guilty.

What our Lord was in days of old on the hills of Galilee or on the lakeshore, that He is always on our altars and in our Tabernacle. "Jesus Christ," says St. Paul, "yesterday, and to-day; and the same forever." All down the ages He has cleansed sin-stained lepers, countless as the sands of the seashore. Who can tell the dead whom He has raised to life under the

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light of the sanctuary lamp? Souls, as numerous as the stars in the heavens, starving in spirit, have been fed at the altar. Blindness of soul, as dark as that which hung upon the eyes of Bartimæus outside of Jericho's gate, has been daily dissipated by the light which came from the Tabernacle. No human plaint, no matter how lowly whispered, has ever been unheard. No tear of grief has ever been shed before the altar-rails, which He has not wiped away. Every burden of sorrow laid at His feet has been lifted from tired and bruised shoulders and henceforth His shoulders have aided in the carrying of the weight. Could we but realize this to some extent, how strong would be our resolves, how vigorous and constant our efforts to be like Him who said: "Come to Me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you"! Yet all these mercies are but a preparation for others still greater which are to come. For the mercies of earth are for us all to end in the mercies of Heaven. Strange that we can think over such love and our poor cold hearts remain unmoved.

Are we in our daily lives growing in the practice of the virtue urged upon us in this Beatitude and by our Lord Himself on another occasion when He said: "Be ye therefore

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merciful, as your Father also is merciful"? God has entrusted to us the execution of His compassionate intentions towards those in suffering, want and sorrow. Lower nature He provides for directly. We know with what beauty He clothes the lilies of the field and how abundantly He feeds the birds of the air, but the wants, miseries, helplessness and weakness of men, these are to be provided for by the exercise of human mercy. This provision—even though it be but a cup of water—He will take as done to Himself. And if this be true of the ills of the body, what will be the gratitude of the Sacred Heart to those who minister to the spiritual wants of the souls for which He bled and died?

"Come ye blessed," is His invitation to those who have fed and clothed His poor and needy. What will be the doom of those who have closed their eyes to the sufferings of His little ones, shut their ears to the cry of His orphans, hardened their hearts to the miseries of the poor whom they have robbed and ground down to the dust?

How much more true and terrible does this truth become when no mercy is shown for the spiritual needs of the souls for which He yearns and thirsts! "Depart, ye cursed," will break

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forth from the lips of the Lamb of God. In the words of Ezechiel will He reproach them: "You ate the milk, and you clothed yourselves with the wool, and you killed that which was fat, but my flock you did not feed. The weak you have not strengthened, and that which was sick you have not healed, that which was broken you have not bound up, and that which was driven away you have not brought again, neither have you sought that which was lost." These words ought to burn deep into our souls, lest the day come when He will require the flock at our hands.

"For they shall obtain mercy." There are two kinds of works of mercy, corporal works and spiritual works. To the performance of each is the promise of mercy attached. Our Lord Himself, as we have already seen, gives as the reason of His invitation into the Kingdom of God, the feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and other deeds of kindness. And the denial of these same acts to the needy is the cause of the rejection of those who shall be cast out. We know His promise for the least act of charity. "Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, amen, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

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To the young man in the Gospel our Lord laid down as a condition of obtaining a treasure in Heaven that he sell and give to the poor. If this be so for those who give their goods to the poor, what will be the mercy shown and the reward granted to those who give not merely their goods, but give themselves, their talents, their prospects, their lives? Yet there are parents daily shutting out their sons and daughters from the religious state where they would willingly make an offering of their lives for the glory of the Sacred Heart. How awful those words of Christ will sound to them at the last day: "I was hungry, and you gave Me not to eat; naked, and you clothed Me not; sick, and in prison and you did not visit Me"! The motherless orphans have cried in the streets for bread, the homeless woman for shelter, the helpless widow for succor, the sick and suffering for those who would nurse them tenderly and lovingly. Our Lord picked out the chosen ones to do Him this charity, but parents have stood in the way and refused the bread and the comfort to Christ. Our Divine Master stretches out His pierced, bleeding hands, but the door is closed in His face, and in the person of His poor He can shiver, starve and die in the street. Such is the blindness which the

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spirit of the world not infrequently brings over the souls of some Catholic parents.

On the other hand, great is the mercy that will come into the lives of fathers and mothers who, seeing in the call of God to their children to the higher life, a manifestation of the divine will, yield to God's wishes and encourage their children in following out such a vocation. Surely of such we can say: "These were men of mercy, whose goodly deeds have not failed; good things continue with their seed, their posterity are a holy inheritance." These parents feel the sword of separation cutting deep into their souls; the daughter's voice was as musical, her smile as bright, her laughter as sweet as in the worldly home where Christ was refused; but worldliness and wealth have not deadened the spirit of faith or blunted conscience or dulled the perceptions of the spiritual life and the rights of Jesus Christ in families where vocations have flourished abundantly.

To those who give not merely their goods or wealth, but their lives with all their hopes and prospects, how great the mercy the Sacred Heart will bestow upon them! Their recompense will surely be in proportion to the generosity of their sacrifice. What a comfort to

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the thousands of brave men and women devoted to the cause of education, given up to the hard, thankless task of the drudgery of the class-room! For them we have the consoling promise: "They that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity." How noble their lives! What a mercy from the Heart of Christ to have received such a call! What a grace to be selected to be extravagantly, recklessly merciful to Christ! "Go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven: and come follow Me." Those that hoard and hold back and are niggardly with God, are poor indeed; those who give all are rich beyond compare.

THE FOUNTAIN OF PEACE

CAN there be anything higher for human effort than purity of heart, rewarded by the vision of God? What nobler object for our striving than freedom from taint and blemish to which is promised the sight of the Father's face? Yet, there are further goals in the spiritual life towards which we may reach out. Our Blessed Lord in the next commandment of the New Dispensation bids us not rest content with cleanness of soul and the spirit of prayer and union with God, which are its reward.

Indeed the Beatitudes could not have stopped at the sixth. For the vision of God promised to the pure of heart must prompt the prayerful soul to renewed spiritual activity. Closeness to God in prayer arouses a keener interest for all that relates to the glory of the Master. Union with God is no idle state of spiritual apathy and selfishness without thought of the dangers which surround other souls and without intense concern for all that belongs to God's honor. On the contrary, the nearer the soul comes to our Heavenly Father in prayer, the more is the fire of zeal enkindled, the more is

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spiritual activity aroused and energy developed. The time spent on our knees which results only in selfishness and inaction and which does not develop a love for souls can scarcely be acceptable prayer.

The Holy Trinity is infinitely happy in the contemplation of Its own infinite beauty and perfection. In the Eternal Godhead there is a ceaseless life of unbounded repose and peace. Yet this everlasting life of contemplation in no way impedes the tireless activity of the Adorable Trinity. Our Lord Himself said: "My Father worketh until now; and I work." From the first moment when His created Soul tabernacled with Mary in the grotto-home at Nazareth, and through all the years, the beatific vision flooded His spirit; and yet from Bethlehem and the manger He toiled and suffered for souls even to Calvary and the cross. The sands that are washed by the sea, the stars that keep their night-watches in the dark sky, the pulses and throbbings of men's hearts—poor, restless hearts—are not as many as the graces of the Holy Spirit showered on human souls. The tide of the ocean, the flight of time, the attraction of the sun, are not as constant or as ceaseless as is His effort to win our love and draw us to His service.

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The angels, too, whose life is one of never-ending prayer, who are ever chanting before His throne: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts," are nevertheless His messengers. Holy Writ says of them: "Bless the Lord, all ye His angels, you that are mighty in strength, and execute His word, hearkening to the voice of His orders." The same is true in the lives of holy men. The time spent before their crucifix and in presence of the Tabernacle fits them for active toil and spurs them on to greater efforts for Him who toiled for souls even to the shedding of His blood. The Beatitude, then, of the vision of God, leads us to the Beatitude of the peacemaker: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

Perhaps none of the Beatitudes fell more appropriately from our Saviour's lips than the one we are considering. Long centuries before the angels sang over the frost-covered hills of Bethlehem His birthday hymn of "peace to men of good will," the prophet Isaias had called Him "Prince of peace." The Eternal Son clothed Himself with our humanity to reconcile Heaven and earth, to make peace between God and man, between the Creator and the creature. His mission was to

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blot out the handwriting against us and restore us to the friendship of the Eternal Father; for this He died upon the cross. Surely He was "the Prince of peace."

The very last night of His life, with the vision of the hatred and malice of Good Friday before His mind, with cries for His blood ringing in His ears, almost the last gift bestowed upon His Apostles was the blessing of peace. How the tender accents of His loving words must have consoled their drooping spirits! "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you." On the day of His victory when man had been reconciled to his Maker, our Lord brought the same blessing to His Apostles. "When it was late that same day, the first day of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them: 'Peace be to you.' " And eight days later, "again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said: 'Peace be to you.' " The same words we find constantly used by the Apostles as a salutation in their Epistles. Doubtless they had learned it from their Master, "the Prince of

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peace," whose mission was one of reconciliation; for "God sent the word to the children of Israel preaching peace by Jesus Christ."

It is possible, however, to mistake the peace inculcated in this Beatitude. It were fatal to imagine it to be the peace of inaction, of cowardice, of surrender, of defeat. It is of no such peace that our Lord spoke on the Hill of the Beatitudes. He Himself said to His Apostles: "Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace but the sword." The peace in question cannot reign in the heart of the coward. It is the result of victory and not of defeat. It supposes a battle and a struggle, and not a shameful flight.

This great gift must be in our own lives before we can be peacemakers and bring it into other lives. It must be in our minds not by the mere absence of temptation, but by that strong spirit of faith through which we yield unhesitating assent to every truth the Church proposes. Under this spirit doubt vanishes.

The will must be at peace, not because it is weak, inert, apathetic, but precisely because it is strong, active, alert. That it does not rise and rebel, is not because it cannot, but because it will not. It so clings to the Divine Will that there is no power, no temptation, that can make

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it deviate from its conformity by even a hair's breadth.

There is also a peace of conscience. This is no numbness or hardness, no dullness of soul or ignorance. On the contrary it demands to a certain extent delicacy and sensitiveness to the touches of grace. This peace of conscience is like the peace which reigns when the battle has been fought and the victory won. It is not the peace during the time of siege and blockade, but the peace which results from the rout and defeat of the enemy.

There is, finally, peace with our neighbor which is conditional and not absolute. Valuable and desirable as it is, there is one price which must not be paid for it. We cannot purchase it by offending our Maker, by an act of disloyalty and infidelity to the Heart of our Blessed Saviour. At this cost it is too dear. St. Paul himself affirms that this peace is not always possible when he says: "Or do I seek to please men? If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." And a greater than Paul bids us: "Fear ye not them that can kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul." When this manifold peace is established in our hearts, then we can be peacemakers indeed.

It is evident that in the highest sense the

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clergy are the great peacemakers, since they administer the Sacrament of reconciliation by which peace is restored between God and man, between the Creator and the creature. But we must always remember for our consolation that the Beatitudes are not restricted to any particular class in the Church. They are of universal application. All can practise them in their daily lives. Every Christian has been addressed by the lips of our Blessed Saviour on the Mount, when He condescended to utter His mandates and promises of the New Law. Each one is called to do His share in this blessed work of peacemaking and in securing the great dignity of divine sonship.

No word of ours in the home must darken the brightness of our fireside, nor chill the currents of affection that flow about our hearth. The sweet music of charity under our roof must not be changed to discord by any unkindness, display of temper, selfishness, evil-speaking, or other faults which ruin so frequently the peace of otherwise happy Christian homes. On the other hand, the true peacemaker will not rest content with merely abstaining from faults that would darken the brightness which should reign round about, but will aim at the practice of those virtues which

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will heal discord and foster the growth of Christian charity and union. What is said of the home is true of our daily contact with our neighbor in every walk of life. How much harm is done even by persons regarded as devout by the failure to strive for this Beatitude in their daily practice of virtue! A single example will suffice. Who has not seen lives saddened and feuds caused by evil-speaking, by unjust criticism, by tale-bearing and by the violation of secrets committed to others?

Vocations have been ruined; homes rendered unhappy; lives once bright have been darkened; dispositions at one time gentle and amiable have become embittered and soured; husbands have even been separated from wives; children set at variance with parents, by the recital of mere suspicions, at times even by deliberate falsehood. Is it not sad to think that often these sins, which wound so painfully the Sacred Heart, are committed by people who kneel frequently at His Holy Table, who partake of the great Sacrament of His love? If at the last day it will be held against us that we have refused Him food and drink in the person of His poor, what will be His anger to find that we have stripped them of their fair name, blighted their lives and ruined the hap-

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piness of their firesides? On the other hand, how great the reward of the peacemaker! How great the recompense of those gentle, strong, Christ-like souls who by kindness and unselfishness unite and knit together in closest charity those who otherwise would be at variance and enmity!

The reward our Blessed Saviour promises is divine sonship. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God." In the language of Scriptures, usually to be called the Son of God and to be the Son of God are the same thing. Thus the angel said to our Blessed Mother: "The Holy that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Hence the peacemakers are to be in some special way the sons of God. In Baptism all of us become sons of God by adoption, and by the infusion of sanctifying grace, which, as St. Peter says, makes us "partakers of the Divine nature," so the sonship promised as a boon for the fulfilment of this Beatitude must be different.

The peacemakers are said to be the "sons of God" because by the practice of this Beatitude they become co-workers with God in the great work of the restoration of peace which He committed to His Divine Son. This work of

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restoring mankind to peace with God may be said to be even the work of the Father, for as our Lord said to the Jews: "The Son cannot do anything of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing. For the Father loveth the Son and showeth Him all things which He Himself doth." The Son was sent as the "Prince of peace." We may say and say truly that the object of the Incarnation was the restoration of peace. Every mystery from the midnight hour in the grotto-home at Nazareth, when Mary became the living tabernacle of the Most High, until she was a childless mother at the foot of the cross, was intended to lead men to God and to break the power of the enemy who seeks man's rebellion against his Maker. The healing of our poor human nature, disabled and wounded by sin, and its restoration to the friendship of the Heavenly Father from whom it had been cut off, this is the work of Jesus Christ, the great Mediator. It is in this work that the peacemakers participate, in this they share. It is thus they become co-workers with God in the great work He has committed to His Son. What dignity can be grander, what mission nobler, what aim higher than to cooperate with God Himself in the carrying out of the great purpose entrusted

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to His Son and for the accomplishment of which that Son died?

Lastly, this Beatitude ought to draw us closer to the great Peacemaker in His Tabernacle, the home of peace. Here no gift can be offered until all enmity and ill-will are laid aside. No gift is accepted unless peace reigns and good-will to all men, in the heart of the giver. At the foot of the altar, where we have daily the unbloody sacrifice which paid the price of our peace, all envy and jealousy, all discord and wrangling, all that can disturb the harmony of Christian hearts, can find no place. From that Tabernacle goes out every day into thousands of hearts light to illumine minds darkened by misunderstandings; from the Tabernacle goes out power into poor, weak human wills, and they are strengthened to make those sacrifices of self-love and pride, which must be made if peace is to reign in Christian families. Within the Tabernacle dwells the Prince of peace, and this Sacrament will bind and knit together in closest ties of love and affection the souls of men, if they will but correspond in some slight degree to the efforts of Him who attracts but never forces the human will.

THE FOUNTAIN OF MARTYRDOM

AT first sight it might seem that the Beatitude of the Peacemakers ought to have been the end of the series. For if one, in addition to the perfection of the preceding Beatitudes, had acquired that peace which surpasseth all understanding, a peace which the world can neither give nor take away, and if his endeavors to spread abroad that peace had merited for him the Divine sonship, it would appear that there was nothing more to be aspired to and nothing further to be added. Yet it is the retaining of this peace in our own hearts and the striving to communicate it to others, which is in a certain sense the cause of this eighth promise and blessing. "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

On the first Easter evening the Apostles were gathered together for fear of the Jews. There was wild excitement in Jerusalem's streets. The tomb of the Malefactor had been found empty. The report had gone abroad that His disciples had stolen the body of their Leader. "Now when it was late that same day, the first day of the week, and the doors were

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shut, where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them: Peace be to you." We have no record of our Lord's having used this salutation until after His resurrection. When He had risen from the dead, it was His common form of greeting. Again and again it occurs in His various apparitions during the forty days that He lingered on earth. Was this to teach that this His peace was purchased by His Passion? Did He refrain from employing this salutation till He had paid the price of peace, His blood? Does He want to show us that there is no peace save through the cross,—that only Calvary, the hill of blood, is the hill of peace? For it was on Calvary that the Prince of peace was slain.

It stands out clearly in the history of the Church and of individual souls that the peace, purchased by our Lord, is to be preserved and spread in the same manner in which it was secured, that is, by suffering and the cross. There is no walking in His footsteps without being tinged by His blood and there can be no peace in treading any other path. Because this is true our Blessed Saviour in this Beatitude left a special blessing for those who suffer for His sake. Again, one of His last testimonies of

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love for His Apostles on the final night of His life was to remind them of the teaching of this Beatitude. How full of pathos and solicitude His words! "Remember My word that I said to you. The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." His life with them was closing. That very night they would abandon Him and flee away. On the morrow He would hang lifeless on the cross. He must warn them both for the present and the future; so the teaching from the hill-top in Galilee is repeated in other words.

In this Beatitude, then, we have from the lips of our Blessed Saviour the promise of the kingdom of Heaven to those who suffer persecution for justice' sake. Before taking up the nature of the opposition and antagonism implied in this law of the New Dispensation, it will be useful to dwell upon a kind of persecution to which people who are thought devout are sometimes subjected, on which no blessing is pronounced, and to which surely no blessing is attached.

Among persons much given to pious exercises we frequently meet those who pose as real martyrs and regard themselves as patterns of patient endurance and models of Christian

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resignation. They openly profess to have the comfort of knowing that at all events the kingdom of Heaven will be theirs. These people are constantly obtruding their religious practices and devotions. Their manner and their lack of tact and judgment arouse opposition. At times they allow their exercises of piety to conflict with obvious duties to home and family, and then they wonder and complain when they are found fault with, but they ever lay the flattering unction to their soul that they are suffering persecution and therefore entitled to the promise of the Beatitude.

Let me illustrate by a few examples. You have the woman who will insist on going to daily Mass and frequent Communion, although her husband may have to go to his hard work without the comfort of a warm breakfast. There are women who will devote hours of their afternoons to the care of slum children, or in attending meetings, or sewing circles, and the time would be better spent in looking after the welfare of their own children and carefully going over the torn garments of their own offspring and household. Men, too, imagine that they are unjustly persecuted who daily spend a certain amount of their hard earned wages on drink and other comforts,

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when money is needed at home to put shoes on the feet of their little ones. These and others often pose as martyrs when called to book and look upon themselves as suffering under a constant persecution. It is needless to say that such have no share in our Lord's promise, and any persecution which falls to their lot is below their deserts and is the outcome of their own crookedness, self-will and perversity.

It is a more congenial task to turn to the meaning of persecution as used by our Blessed Saviour. We must distinguish the virtue required by the Beatitude from patience, meekness, submission and other like qualities. These may be called into play by bodily infirmity, or our own moral weaknesses, but the virtue required in the practice of this Beatitude must be the outcome of persecution. It must come from the action of others. Our Lord Himself explains this when He says: "Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake." This antagonism supposes, then, a certain hatred of God and opposition to His Law, or as our Blessed Saviour expresses it: "for justice' sake." Persecution for justice' sake does not mean alone the opposition and antagonism which are caused solely by hatred

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for the Father ; it includes justice in its widest sense. As a consequence those who suffer in the cause of honesty, charity, or moral virtue of any kind come under the blessing that is promised.

It is consoling to think that the practice of this Beatitude is in a certain sense the cause of the Church's fruitfulness. This is, no doubt, the good which God in His providence draws from the malice of men, in addition to the exercise of heroic virtue by His children. How many thousand hearts have been made braver and stouter from the courage of the Baptist who flung into the teeth of the lecherous king the unlawfulness of the life he was leading ! This testimony of John to the Master brought about his death, and the promise of the kingdom of Heaven was his. Our Lord speaking from the porches of the Temple gives in a parable the reason of this fertility of persecution : "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat, falling into the ground, die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die it bringeth forth fruit."

From the very beginning persecution, far from killing the Faith, has aided in its spread. No clearer instance of this could be given than the history of the Irish people. It was the

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death of St. Stephen that brought about the conversion of no less a son of the Church than St. Paul. As one of the Fathers put this law of Providence, "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians." In each individual life it is well that trials should come. A life without the cross were far from a noble one. Contradiction, pain, persecution are the salt of the moral earth, the source of the highest and purest virtues to which nature can give birth. But since Calvary they are more. Our Lord ennobled them by taking them upon Himself and blessing them in the Beatitudes. They are His livery, the badge of His dearest friends, of His mother, of His apostles, of His martyrs, of all who follow in His footsteps.

The promise of the kingdom of Heaven is added to this eighth and last Beatitude. This reward is taken by various writers in a manifold sense. In the first place the kingdom of Heaven may be interior, that is, within the heart of those who endure persecution. The spirit of faith and loving trust in God's Providence is strengthened in their souls. The peace and the joy of the Holy Spirit grow and deepen within them. They possess the ineffable consolation of becoming daily more like their Divine Master, who was "despised, and the

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most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity." Every trial and tribulation, every suffering and sorrow, pain, sickness, poverty, all and each if accepted from the hand of our loving Father have a tendency to develop within us this spirit of the kingdom of Heaven. For crosses that weigh heavily upon us, crosses which press us to the earth arouse our faith and trust in God's Providence and cause us to rest securely in the hollow of His hand. They bring home to us that the disciple is no better than the Master, and so we grow in likeness to Him.

What is true of ordinary afflictions is still more true when there is question of persecution and suffering inflicted by our fellow-men. Persecution has ever been a more severe trial, a more sifting test than the ordinary sufferings which come through the action of God by other causes. The cunning, hatred, and inventiveness which men employ make it peculiarly difficult to endure. The severity which human malice inflicts and the varied forms persecution can take, give it, when accepted for our Lord's sake, a special power for the sanctification of souls and consequently an efficacy all its own for bringing about the kingdom of God in the hearts of those so favored.

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The kingdom of Heaven belongs to the persecuted not as an ordinary reward, but as a reward for valor and bravery, a reward which they have won by force. Those who courageously withstand persecution are the soldiers of the kingdom. They are men of no cowardly spirit and weak will, men who fight for no sordid or selfish motives. Rather are they soldiers brave and loyal, stout of heart and strong of arm, who love the Leader and His standard the cross; soldiers who in the fight must ever be close to the Leader's side and under the tattered banner. It is small wonder if for such as these is the kingdom of Heaven.

When all has been said, only a love for our suffering Saviour can make this Beatitude possible in our lives. If we strive for it from any other motive, failure is inevitable. When persecution comes into life all human props often slip away. Friends who once warmly clasped our hands and smiled upon us with the light of love in their eyes, coldly turn their backs upon us and look into our faces no more. Firesides that were once warm and cheerful, at which we were ever welcome, will receive us never again. Harsh words, bitter criticisms, unjust imputation of motives, like cold, sharp

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steel, cut with a keen edge, deep down into our hearts. At times in the hour of stress and trial, not only are the material comforts of other days withdrawn, but even the bare necessities for the morrow are not forthcoming. Not unfrequently our own flesh and blood, whom we have loved from childhood, turn against us and bid us go our way alone out into the cold, bleak darkness of the future. Then, too, there may be young lives, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, who also must suffer. Opposition, antagonism, privations, single-handed we could fight; we could battle alone on into the dark and uncertain years. But when we realize that young lives, which are dearer to us than our own, are darkened, their bright hopes put out, their growing years blasted and shattered, then it is that persecution bites cruelly and leaves behind jagged, bleeding edges, that sting with a burning, lasting pain. Oh! the bitterness of it, when we see eyes once bright with smiles, dim with the pearls of sorrow glistening in them; faces that used to ripple with wavelets of joy, now furrowed with pain and disappointment.

Then surely the battle is on. In that hour there is only one place where we can stand in the fight and win. We must climb the hill of

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Golgotha and through a darkness akin to that which hung over that holy mount in the hours of the eclipse on Good Friday, look up into the face of the Master and listen to the words, wrung from His dying lips, as they break the awful stillness of Calvary: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" We shall hear the quiet sobbing of Mary and kneeling we shall unite our sorrow to that of the poor devoted, broken-hearted Mother at the foot of the cross. We cannot, of course, go to the Calvary that loomed up outside Jerusalem's walls, but we can go to the altar, we can turn our faces and our footsteps to the Tabernacle and from behind its gilded door we can hear the same cry come forth into our souls. Then we shall realize perhaps as we never realized before, that the Sacred Heart endured deeper desolation than ours, and by His divine touch has sanctified our pain, so that through it we may win the kingdom of Heaven.

THE SPRING IN THE DESERT

JOHAN the Baptist came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching in the desert of Judea the baptism of penance." On the banks of the Jordan not far from where the river empties into the Dead Sea, in the first year of our Lord's public life, stood a strange preacher bidding the people make ready for the coming of the Messias. The Baptist had come forth from the wilderness to announce that "the kingdom of Heaven was nigh." Here was a strange preacher indeed. Before the first clear tone of his voice had rung out over the waters and along the valley, before the tongue which for years had not uttered a syllable save in prayer to God, broke its self-imposed silence, the bronzed and emaciated countenance, the look of scorn and indignation, the unshorn locks, the close-pressed lips, the leathern girdle and the mantle of camel's hair betokened that here at last was a man filled with the fire of the prophets of old and with the spirit of God.

His life was known. It was no secret that his drink was the clear water from the rocky hillsides of the wilderness; his food, locusts

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and wild honey; his garments, the leathern girdle and the rough camel's hair mantle. None doubted that here was a preacher superior to the common ambitions and weaknesses of the Priests round about him, one who would not cringe to the hypocritical Pharisee or bend the knee to proud Scribe or haughty Roman. His language did not consist of the sleek formalities or dull truisms heard of a Sabbath in the synagogue; it was not a language learned in the schools of the Rabbis, but in the school of solitude, communing in prayer with his own soul and with the Most High. Men felt as they looked at his thin face, his wasted form, and his fiery eyes, as they listened to his burning words, that the man before them had a mission to fulfil, a message to deliver, a destiny to accomplish.

When John the evangelist, the beloved disciple, was well on in years he wished to commit to writing the story of his Master's life. He was old and his heart hungered for our Lord's presence. Many years had come and gone since John had looked into that loved face that he knew so well. Many years had passed away since he had seen the smile on our Lord's lips, brighter than the sun-rise on snow-capped hills. Since then the evangelist had

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labored long and lovingly. One by one the others had gone and he alone remained lingering on in exile waiting the call. He was old now and feeble. His hair was sparse and white, his steps slow and his form wasted and bent, and there was a lonesome longing in his eyes. Then it was that the vision of the Word came to him. In telling that vision he thus spoke of the Baptist: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness to give testimony of the light, that all men might believe through him; he was not the light, but was to give testimony of the light."

"This man came for a witness." John was a witness to the power of the Master's grace, in his preparation for the work of bearing "testimony of the light." When the Baptist was born in the hill country of Judea, there were strange and hard days for his people in their native land. The sceptre had passed from the hands and the crown from the head of his nation. Idumean Tetrarchs and Roman Procurators ruled the nation and contemptuously set aside or tampered with the most sacred Jewish traditions and customs. Imperial officers and soldiers strode haughtily through the streets of the sacred city and loitered in the



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very precincts of the Holy Temple. The yoke of Rome pressed heavily upon the shoulders of a proud, stubborn, conquered race, and cut deep. This was the condition of his native land when the call came to John to leave the aged Zachary and Elizabeth, to retire into solitude and prepare himself to be a witness, to give testimony of the light. "And the child grew up and was strengthened in spirit, and was in the deserts until the day of his manifestation to Israel."

But why should John bury himself in the desert? He belonged to a priestly family and might have taken a position of importance in influencing the destinies of his country. Never was she in direr need of brave men and true. Why seek a life of selfish solitude when his people were oppressed? Judas Machabaeus had not done so in days of stress and trial. Now the sanctuary on Mount Moriah was desecrated by strangers, the laws were despised, the manners and customs sacred to his forefathers turned to ridicule. Had Jerusalem ever before been in such want of strong arms and stout hearts? Thoughts of this kind may have been flashed across the mind of the silent upgrowing boy often found alone on the heights of the hills. Similar objections are too often

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found in Catholic homes. When God calls young, pure souls to go out into the hills of the higher life, to go out into solitude and prayer, to prepare themselves to be precursors for Christ into many hearts, how often do parents, guided by a selfish and worldly love, hold them back and keep the souls for whom our Blessed Lord yearns on the lowlands and marshes of the world and its vanities! True love is not that which basks in the sunshine of the loved one's presence, but that which can endure separation and absence for the higher interests of the object of our affection.

John went forth, then, into the desert to be a witness, to give testimony of the light. His father had said of him: "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High. For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His way." It was to fulfil this mission that John went into the wild and barren heights that overlook the Dead Sea. This very separation from home and kindred was a testimony to the power of our Saviour's grace. Who can doubt but that the priestly home of Zachary in the hill-country was dear to John? Surely a youth of such gifts and such parts must have loved the aged priest and his saintly mother. They were both on in years now.

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The snows of many winters had passed over their heads. Humanly speaking, their course was run and short would be their tarrying; soon those loved forms would be seen no more; perhaps before the spring broke again over the heights, their loved forms would be laid away in their last sleep, in the tombs on the hillsides.

Surely this was no easy sacrifice. To go into the bleak summits of the mountains, to leave his father and mother solitary and alone in their old age must have pained deeply and cruelly the tender heart of the Baptist. Such a parting could not be sanctioned unless the call came from Him who spoke to John, as He had spoken to Abraham: "Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall show thee." This was the call John heard deep down in his heart and he went forth into the wilds to be a witness and to "give testimony of the light."

What a glorious testimony to Christ those years of preparation were! The moment the voice of the Master spoke to his young soul, he obeyed. He was to give "testimony of the light" and the instant that light flickered up never so faintly before his spiritual vision, he followed it to the end. In his following of the

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light there was no hesitancy, no tarrying, no turning back. Doubts, fears, anxieties about the direction, length or roughness of the road were banished. He was to be a witness and hence by his life he must speak the truth. He embraced and followed the call with all the readiness and affection of his noble heart. Every worldly prospect was flung aside, every natural ambition crushed. Home, friends, parents, earthly aspirations were all left and he turned his face towards the wilderness to give "testimony of the light" in his years of preparation for his great mission.

John became a dweller in the wilds, far from Jerusalem with its busy streets and noble Temple. Out on the bleak hills he lived his life of solitude, austerity and prayer. If later on he was to point out the Lamb of God, if he was to be "greater than a prophet" and show men Him whom the prophets foretold, then in silence and in communion with his own soul and his God, for long years must he ponder what Holy Writ said of the Master, so that when Christ came he could "give knowledge of salvation to His people." If he was to "give testimony of the light" it was necessary that he himself should follow that light now shining in his own heart. If later on he spoke along

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the Jordan with a zeal and a fire that reminded men of what they had heard of Elias and Isaias, Jeremias and the prophets, it was because the fire had been kindled in his long years of watching, abstinence and prayer.

During all the silent years John himself had his "garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins ; and his food was locusts and wild honey." A strong man was needed to be a witness to Christ. No weakling could do the work or fulfil the mission. When God destines a man for a great office, He fits him to accomplish it. His grace was preparing John. The power of that grace in the Baptist's soul is manifested by our Lord's own words. One day in Galilee, speaking to the people of His holy Precursor, Christ said: "What went you out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what went you out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold they that are in soft apparel and live delicately are in the houses of kings. But what went you out to see? A prophet? Yea, I say to you and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written: Behold, I send My angel before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee. Amen, I say to you, there has not risen among them that are born of

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women a greater prophet than John the Baptist." Yes, John was greater than a prophet; he saw present and before his eyes Him whom the prophets saw only in the dim distance and in vision; he pointed out Him whom the prophets foretold.

Such was the effect of the holy Precursor's preparation. These were no idle years—as the world judges time given to prayer—but years of great spiritual activity; years which told in the building up of his own spiritual character; years during which he was rearing himself to be a witness in another manner; years fashioning him to give another "testimony to the light." How well he bore that testimony, how truly he witnessed to the Master shall be dwelt upon in our next Holy Hour. In the meantime let us remind ourselves that we too must be witnesses to Christ, we too must bear "testimony of the light." To do that we need the spirit of John. It is no spirit of softness and effeminacy which is to point out Christ to men to-day. Our example would be more effective, our words more convincing, our lives more Catholic, if there was about them more of the ring of the Baptist. Love of ease and comfort, thinking more of gold than of God or goodness, a spirit of servility which makes us

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cringe to the tyrannical dictates of wealth and fashion, an almost utter and continual absence of penance and mortification in our daily lives, the infrequent use of the Sacraments and constant neglect of prayer, those and other features too common in many Catholics are far from the robustness and strength of the piety of the Baptist. Such men and women are no witnesses to our Lord and give no testimony of the light. These suggestions and others of a similar character might well be laid to heart during the season of Advent, the season of preparation for the Christmas joys. And when all is said and everything weighed under the light of the sanctuary lamp the best Christmas preparation, the best Christmas giving is true Christian living, worthy of being set side by side with that of John the Baptist, our Lord's Forerunner.

THE WELL OF BITTER-SWEET WATERS

DURING our last Holy Hour our thoughts dwelt upon the testimony which the Baptist rendered to the Master during the long silent years of his preparation in the solitude of the desert. His prayerful life of communion with God among the bleak and arid hills was an inspiration and a training for his after years of trial and ceaseless activity. In fact, it were difficult to fancy the hard, continuous toil without the previous dedication to quiet meditation on the barren heights far from the jarring sounds of the busy world. For it is as true now as in the days of John that the real source of all spiritual activity must be union with God. And as that prayer is to be suspected which does not blossom into works of zeal, so works of zeal whose source is not prayer may easily be nought but pure natural activity and nervous energy.

Early in the summer of the year in which our Lord began His public ministry, "the word of the Lord came to John, the son of Zachary, in the desert. And he came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins." Both the

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manner of the man and the character of his preaching must have been a surprise to the ordinary Jew and somewhat of a shock to the self-satisfied Priest and the hypocritical Scribe and Pharisee.

This preacher had not been formed on the common lines of the Jewish Priesthood. His education had not been conducted under the eye of the Sanhedrin, nor under such masters as Hillel or Gamaliel. Nor were his early years passed amidst the comforts of a priestly home. No luxuries had fallen to his lot; in early life he had cut himself away from the affectionate endearments of the kindest of parents. He had been seldom seen in the Temple of which his father was a priest and in Jerusalem's streets he was no familiar figure. From early boyhood he dwelt with God out on the desolate wild heights overlooking the Dead Sea. The heavy cobalt waters, booming on its sad shores, told him the story of God's anger in the destruction of the cities of the Plain.

What manner of man would, under such a training, come forth from the wilds of Judea? Surely no well-fed, cringing Priest, no formalistic Pharisee. No lover of ease and comfort is the natural outcome of such a schooling.

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No wonder then that the son of Zachary came out from the desert and "had his garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his food was locusts and wild honey." Of the manner of man he was, our Lord Himself testified: "Amen I say to you, there hath not risen among them that are born of women, a greater than John the Baptist."

His preaching was in keeping with his life. When the clear voice of John rang out and vibrated along the Jordan, men felt that here was no maker of fine phrases, no trimmer of doctrine. He spoke with a fire in his eye, a glow on his tanned face, and with a conviction in his voice which men had not heard in recent days in the synagogues or in Jerusalem's Temple. No self-conscious grace of diction, no studied elegance of gesture accompanied his words. This man had dwelt too long in prayer on the message he had to deliver to mistake its meaning. He realized too clearly its necessity in men's lives to mince its import. "Do penance," he cried, "for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." "Bring forth, therefore, fruit worthy of penance. . . . For the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, that yieldeth not good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire." Brave words

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these! Such language comes appropriately from the lips of the man in whose life the teaching was practised. This doctrine, distasteful as it must have been, was John's testimony to His Master. It was sorely needed both by the preachers and the people of his time.

To-day there is the same, and even greater, need of this lesson of penance. Unless we are on our guard, this necessity of penance impresses our daily lives but very slightly. This is true even of those who aspire to the practice of more than ordinary piety. They will attend readily enough special devotions, even daily Mass. They go frequently to Communion, they visit our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and in all this they do well. But search their lives for that strong, robust piety which blossoms out into works of penance; look for acts of self-denial, for guard over their tongues and senses; look for the crushing out of the spirit of worldliness; look for positive acts of kindness and forgiveness towards those whom they dislike; seek for practices of self-effacement and hidden acts of humility, and often the search is scantily rewarded. In too many Catholic homes there is fostered and developed too great a love of ease and bodily comfort,

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not to say luxury, which enervates any vigorous spiritual life. A love of dress, a love of pleasure, a love of dissipation, incompatible with the robust practice of virtue, is often considered quite proper. Any contrary opinion is looked upon as an exaggeration. No doubt the Baptist in his day was regarded as exaggerated.

What with suppers, parties, receptions, theatres—even the holy seasons of Advent and Lent are not sacred—a good part of the lives of men and women is spent in distraction and a constant whirl of pleasure. The disturbed consciences are quieted and soothed by the recollection that some extra pious practices have been adopted and carried out with more or less intermittent regularity and fidelity. But devotions, no matter how holy, if they are to ring true and have practical value, must bud forth into the good works that ought to characterize a truly Christian life. “Not every one who saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of God,” but he who brings forth the fruits of solid deeds of penance, unworldliness and self-restraint. Unless we are followers of the Master only in name, we must “deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow” His example. The path that our Lord trod

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is stained by blood; shall we expect ours to be strewn with roses?

Later on in the year John gave another testimony to our Blessed Saviour. The suspicion was growing among the people that perhaps the Baptist might be the Messiah. The people were of opinion and all were thinking in their hearts, that perhaps he might be the Christ. When the Jews sent from Jerusalem Priests and Levites to him, to ask him: "Who art thou?" the Baptist denied that he was the Christ. "Art thou Elias?" And he said: "I am not." "Art thou the Prophet?" "No," was his prompt reply. "Who art thou, then, that we may give answer to them that sent us?" Then it was that the Baptist gave his testimony: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'" No temptation to claim the honors of the Messiah, no desire to pose as "the Anointed One" or as "the Expectation of the Nations" could be stirred in that unselfish heart. In his long years of self-effacement, when he had mastered every yearning of worldly ambition, perhaps he had seen too clearly the vision of the crown of thorns, to desire any earthly honor for himself. Hence his strong and unmistakable answer: "I am the

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voice. I am to deliver a message; that delivered, the voice dies. I am to give testimony; that given, the witness disappears."

A still further proof of John's loyalty is found in the events of a day or two later. The forty days of fast were over and our Lord, leaving the desert, came to the Jordan where was the Baptist with Andrew and John, afterwards "the beloved disciple." Looking upon Jesus as He was walking, he saith: "Behold the Lamb of God." And the two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus. Here truly was a test. Here indeed the Baptist was a witness to his Master. It may have been easy to brush aside an unfounded claim to be the Messiah or the Christ, but to relinquish his own disciples, to pass on to another those cherished companions, those loved comrades, this surely is a deep proof of unselfish devotedness. To preach publicly on the Jordan's banks, to be clothed with camel's hair, to live on locusts and wild honey, to crush any rising thought of earthly ambition, all this for the Baptist was a willing, an easy testimony. But to part from those whose aims and views were one with his own, to separate from loved friends who had labored in the same cause, who were inspired by the same motives and

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lofty purposes, to part from those whose affections had twined round his heart as the ivy twines about the crumbling tower, was a testimony worthy of the Baptist, worthy of the Master he served.

Shortly after the Passover of the first year in our Lord's public life, our Blessed Saviour was tarrying in Judea with His disciples. These were carrying on the work of the ministry under the direction of our Lord and were baptizing in the Jordan all who thronged to them. About the same time up at Ennon near Salim the Baptist and his companions were toiling to prepare men's hearts for the reception of the Messias. As yet the Precursor had not been cast into prison; as yet that supremest testimony of love, his life, had not been asked of him. That sacrifice would soon be required and John would not be found unprepared.

While thus busily engaged in carrying on the work of his ministry "there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews concerning purification. And they came to John and said to him: 'Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou gavest testimony, behold, He baptizeth and all men come to Him.' " John's disciples did not

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yet fully understand his mission. They had not yet realized that he was more than a prophet and was to point out Him of whom the prophets foretold. It seemed hard to bear and strange, too, that the people should be following the new Teacher whom their own master had baptized and the handful of Galilean fishermen who were His followers; and so, there is a tone of complaint in their question. Never was John nobler and more tender than in his answer.

Looking into their honest faces with sympathy and affection and with a light in his eyes different from that which burned there when he preached with fiery zeal along the river banks, the Baptist said: "You yourself do bear me witness that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but that I am sent before Him." They could not have forgotten the day "when the Jews sent from Jerusalem Priests and Levites to him, to ask him: 'who art thou?' and he confessed and did not deny. And he confessed: 'I am not the Christ.'" The memory of this great confession will surely not soon pass from their minds. Then in language that seems strange from the lips of this rugged and sun-tanned ascetic, this man who had lived his life in the open and had with burning



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words rebuked Priest and Pharisee and haughty Roman, the Baptist continued: "He that hath the bride, is the bridegroom. But the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all."

Noble words and worthy to be the last recorded from his lips in the Gospel pages! When he speaks again, he will speak the noblest and sublimest language man can speak, the language of blood. Never before were John's words so gentle, never was the expression on his sun-burnt face so loving, never was the light in his eyes so soft and bright. This is his last testimony to the Master addressed not to suspicious Priest or jealous Pharisee or Scribe, but to his own loved disciples, to those who had cast in their lot with him and had bravely followed in his footsteps and trustingly believed in him and his teaching. Now before the prison-door shuts him off from their view, before the prison-bolt harshly flies back and locks him in the dark dungeon, he wanted to give them a testimony that would explain his own life and death and

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at the same time guide their faltering footsteps to Christ. Hear his words: "He must increase and I must decrease."

His mission is over, his work is done. The setting of his sun in a sky tinged with the color of blood, is the harbinger of a glorious sunrise, the rise of One of whom he had said: "He who is to come after me, is stronger than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down, and loose and carry." For one purpose he had toiled, for one aim he had labored, for one work he had striven, and now **that** it is accomplished, for "all men come to Him," he is content to pass from the scene. Not only is he content, but he "rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom's voice." All these years he has waited and worked not for himself, not for his own glory, but for the glory of the bridegroom, of the Master who must increase, while His Precursor must decrease. John's star is on the wane, the Master's is in the ascendant. The Baptist must sink in silence into the grave and the Master must grow into fuller glory and light. What difference does it make to the Baptist if he is to languish in prison in the dungeons of Machærus? The message has been delivered, the testimony given. The one important

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thing is as he so nobly said: "He must increase and I must decrease." Surely it is true that amongst those born of women, there has not been greater than John the Baptist.

Here under the light of the Sanctuary Lamp we must learn the lesson, so hard to acquire, so difficult to practise. The lesson of unselfishness, so vital in the spiritual life, is no easy one to make real in our daily lives. True piety has been said to be the "unselfing of self." To forget our own small troubles, to lay aside our own petty grievances, to eschew low aims, to crush out self-seeking and to check vanity and worldliness require no little courage, no slight effort. If, like John, we can forget ourselves and our own narrow interests and become absorbed in one great purpose, the glory of the Master, then will our hearts be brave and our efforts strong and constant. Then shall we not only toil and labor for this end patiently, but even cheerfully. For we too shall hear the voice of the bridegroom speaking to our hearts in holy Communion or before the Tabernacle. Then too our joy shall be fulfilled and we shall rejoice with a great joy and our battle-cry shall be: "He must increase and I must decrease."

THE FOUNTAIN OF BLOOD

WE now come to consider the last and greatest testimony of the Baptist to his Master, the testimony of blood. It is the highest, for "greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

The days of John's toil were over. His work was done. That familiar form, thin and emaciated, would be seen no more among the hills of Jericho. No longer would his voice ring out in unmistakable accents over the Jordan's waters or along its banks. His testimony had been given, his message delivered, his mission accomplished, and now, as he said, he must decrease and the Master increase. He, the morning-star, the harbinger of a new day, must pale at the breaking of the dawn and at the rising of the Sun of Justice, "the True Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world."

The holy Precursor was now languishing in the barred and bolted cell of the strong prison of Machærus. South of the hills of Jericho and high up on the rocky and arid cliffs which overlook the Dead Sea, stood one of Herod's

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palaces, into whose dark dungeon the Baptist had been thrown, after he had flung with burning scorn into the faces of Herod and Herodias the crime and public scandal of their sinful lives. Not infrequently unflinching loyalty to duty in this life entails suffering and self-sacrifice. To the man, however, who loves Christ after the manner of the Baptist, the privilege of sharing the cross is already a reward above all price. Not flesh and blood, but the spirit of faith makes the value of Calvary in our lives so clear and so precious.

Perhaps from the narrow barred window of his cell, through which filters a slanting ray of the setting sun, John can see the rugged hill country of Judea stretching away to the south. Across the Sea of Death are the fertile heights of Hebron teeming with ever recurring memories of Abraham and the Patriarchs and of his own early childhood. A little north of Hebron, Bethlehem with its tender story of infant yet divine love, clings to the chalk hills of Juda. Out from the City of Bread the old white road, the oldest road in the world, steals up the ascents and down the slopes towards the City of David. John will know that over that road Mary and Joseph trod on the first cold Christmas eve on their way to Bethlehem

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where "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." Will he gather strength and comfort from the thought that his Master in His Mother's arms fled from another Herod over the desert into distant Egypt?

These thoughts may have occurred to the Baptist's mind during the days of his imprisonment. Yet though the dungeon of Machærus may have been dark and the slowly moving hours were broken by no human consolation, there was no darkness in the soul of the saintly prisoner, and no gloom hung over his spirit. At the foot of the cliff the Dead Sea's waves may moan and sigh and weep, as if in sorrowful dirges chanting his requiem; but if the sad wailing of the waves reaches him in his solitary cell, their music can bring no sorrow to his brave heart. What reckes the Baptist that it be cold and damp in his dark dungeon? It was cold and dark and damp on the hills of Judea during his years of preparation. What cares he if the food be scanty and coarse? His food in the desert was locusts and wild honey. There can be no sadness in his soul, for in the quiet of his cell he hears the Master's voice, and "the friend of the Bridegroom, who standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth with joy because of the Bridegroom's voice." How

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dark and dreary our days, how sad our poor timid hearts when the Master even from afar treats us as He did John, and allows a faint shadow of the cross in our lives! Strange soldiers, who look for victory without a battle and with no sign of blood!

It was the weakness and the wickedness of Herod, together with the hatred of an angry woman, that had cast the Baptist into the dungeon of Machærus. When Herod Antipas, after a visit to Rome when he put away his lawful wife, returned to Galilee, he brought with him Herodias, the wife of his brother, and Salome, her daughter. At Tiberias, on the western shore of the Lake of Galilee, they no doubt tarried for a time. Tiberias was in those days a place of luxury and dissipation. It rivalled the capital of the Roman world in vice and sin. Thither in winter the wealthier Jews were wont to come for the warm baths, for pleasure and amusements. Thither the Roman officers flocked and aped the gay and guilty life of Rome itself. In reading its story we are reminded of the winter resorts of our own day. These of course can be frequented only by men and women of wealth. Fault could not be found with Catholics of means if they betook themselves to these resorts because of

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ill-health or to obtain a much needed relaxation. In such instances there is a justification. But is one guiltless before God who squanders time and money at such places merely because it is dull in the north during Lent? Will God hold those free from sin who season after season, merely to be in the social swim (how often too they swim in murky waters!) spend the most sacred time of the year in brainless dissipation, lazy wastefulness of precious hours, or in the soulless display of the full purse, whilst God's poor are crying for bread in the streets, and men, women and children are shivering in cold attics where the biting wind blows through rag-stuffed windows?

The rich are the guardians, not the owners, of wealth. They are to feed the poor and clothe the naked under pain of eternal damnation. "I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat," is the reproach that comes from the lips of Him, who feeds the swallows of the air and clothes the lilies of the field. Life is too short and money is too precious and useful for the poor and for God's works to be sinfully frittered away in the selfish indulgence of private whims, silly vanity, disgusting social climbing, epicurean eating and

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drinking, and a display of extravagance which has not even the justification of refinement or good taste.

While the guilty pair were tarrying at Tiberias rumors were spreading of the strange preacher who haunted the hills and passed along the Jordan banks calling men to lives of penance. The story of the preaching of the new asceticism, emphasized by the stern and unworldly life of the Baptist, may have been a joke among the flatterers of the King and an occasion for merriment among the pleasure-seekers by the lake-shore. At all events, Herod's curiosity was aroused and John was summoned to preach in the royal presence before the court. Their dulled appetites needed to be stimulated by a novel amusement. Some variety must be afforded to break life's monotony for the surfeited votaries of the fashionable seaside resort. The time hung heavy on their hands. If Herod expected an ordinary Rabbi like the sleek priests that ministered to listless worshippers on the Sabbath, he was soon to be undeceived. The hours of luxury were to be broken in upon by a sudden, unwonted jolt which left courtiers speechless, and which brought the blush even to Herod's shameless cheek and kindled the fire of hate

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and roused the thirst for revenge in the soul of the guilty Herodias.

A strange audience had gathered that day to hear the sermon in the marble palace by the sea. Heretofore men of every class and condition had jostled one another on the river bank in their eagerness to listen to the words of this stern Rabbi. To-day, however, his auditors are of kingly rank and of the court. They are present in the pleasure-seeking spirit with which they attend the race in the Coliseum or on the lake, in the same spirit with which they loiter about the hotel porches or stroll along the white sands of the beach. The gilded ball-room of the palace is filled with a distinguished gathering. The king in regal costume is on his throne, with the guilty Herodias and her daughter seated on either side. The courtiers, Roman officers and court ladies in brilliant Roman or oriental costumes are there, to lend dignity to the condescension of the King on this remarkable occasion. Suddenly every whisper is hushed and expectant silence settles upon the assemblage. Every head is turned in curiosity and every eye is riveted upon the Baptist as he enters the hall. With firm step he approaches the shameless couple. His cheeks, tanned by years of exposure to

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the weather, flush with indignation, his clear eyes, so often lit in prayer, flash fire. There is no fear in the wan and emaciated countenance of John, as raising his thin and roughened hand, in clear and distinct voice that cuts each word he exclaims: "You cannot live with your brother's wife."

How needed and salutary the lesson in these our own days of divorce! What a protection to our faith in these days when the marriage-bond sits so loosely on so many joined together in holy wedlock! From the hour when the Baptist sealed his fate by his reproach of the guilty Herod till this hour, it has ever been the teaching of Christ and His Church that what God hath joined together no man may put asunder. From the day the Catholic stands before God's altar and swears to protect and love the woman of his choice, he may not take the hand of another, till the grave receives her to whom he has sworn to be faithful till death. The woman who accepts the plain gold ring at the sanctuary rail will, as far as the Catholic Church can bring it about, sink into the tomb wearing on her untarnished brow the chaste crown of wifehood and motherhood.

While divorce is not possible among Catholics, how strange the attitude of not a few

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members of the Church! For the sake of what they consider some little social advancement, one step higher on the social ladder, they expose themselves and their children to moral degradation. Their social standing increases, they think, but their moral worth decreases. They will go into the society where divorced people are received and thus countenance by their presence sin and shame. They allow their daughters to associate with moral lepers, whose touch soils and whose breath contaminates. What is to be done? What would be done if men and women foul with contagious disease were present at receptions, balls, theatres? Do the same when there is question of associating with people who are foul and reeking with moral diseases. Why sacrifice or at least endanger the eternal welfare of souls dearer to us than life, "to be admitted into society," as it is called? We are all on a social level if we go back far enough. Many need go back only to the days of the famine to find their ancestors, noble men and women as they were, banished in poverty to a foreign land.

How disgusting to find the descendants of such become purse-proud, and not only that, but become the hangers-on to the outer circle

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of people whose fathers, had they dared, would have prevented our forefathers from landing on the shores of this country! How the society of to-day often fast, corrupt and rotten to the core, despises the cringing parasites who creep and crawl and sacrifice every principle for recognition! They allow mixed marriages, they send their sons and daughters to non-Catholic schools, the Church and Catholic education they help little and criticize much. When will they learn that it is not the gown, or the flashing diamond, or the marble mansion that makes the true woman, but purity of soul and uprightness of heart? A man is not made by his bank account, or by his tailor, or by being a member of a fashionable club. True manhood consists in nobility of aim, cleanness of living, unswerving honesty, respect and reverence for woman and in the practice of those manly Christian virtues that shone so brilliantly in the lives of our poorer but nobler fathers and grandfathers.

Herod did not dare put the Baptist to death, because of the people who loved the stern preacher among the hills and on the banks of the Jordan; so casting him into the prison of Machærus, he bided his time. Even if Herod had been willing to pardon the rebuke of the

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Baptist, Herodias, the partner of his guilt, would neither forget nor forgive. The cutting words of John had stung her like scorpions and had bitten deep into her callous heart. Long she meditated upon her plans. Cunningly and secretly her schemes were devised. Silently and patiently she waited her opportunity. Solitude, hunger, suffering in a dark prison could feed fat her hate, but they could never satisfy it. Only blood could wipe out that insult, only death.

The birthday of the king had come. Machærus was gay with glittering clusters of lights. From the banquet-hall floated sensuous music out over the Dead Sea. Perhaps the strains were heard by the Baptist below in his dark dungeon. Perhaps, like Baltassar's feast of old, a thousand guests sat at table. The Arabian sheiks had come in from the desert on their fleet steeds. Roman officers in brilliant uniform had ridden in their chariots of white and gold. Priest and Pharisee were there that night to curry favor with the dissolute ruler. The sound of the clinking of the glasses and golden vessels, the wild drunken laughter of the guests, the noise of boisterous mirth and brutal feasting swept in repulsive echoes through the window of John's lonely

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quiet cell. But his thoughts are with the Master and His life. His soul is tinged with no hue of sadness, but with gratitude and love, for the voice of the Bridegroom will soon bid him come. His testimony given so generously will soon be sealed with his blood.

When the guests are surfeited with eating and their faces flushed and heated with the rich purple wine, when they are drunk over their goblets and the music is stirring every animal passion by its sensuous strains, the curtains at the end of the hall part and upon the stage the daughter of Herodias, Salome, with every grace of motion dances immodestly before the drunken king and his guests. Herod is pleased and promises in reward whatsoever she might ask. "What shall I ask?" is the question she puts to her mother. "Shall I ask an Arabian steed? Shall I ask for a Roman chariot? Shall I ask for a yacht on the sea or a villa by the Lake? Will it be jewels for my neck and fingers? Will it be gowns of eastern texture and oriental dye?" "No, daughter," hissed Herodias, "ask for the head of the Baptist!"

Quiet fell upon the hall. The king was sad because of the request. The instruments of music were dumb and every guest was silent;

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all eyes were riveted upon the door which suddenly flew back, as the soldier entered with the head of John the Baptist in a dish. Salome's dance had cost the Precursor of Christ his life. And to-day the Salome dance reproduced on the modern stage is costing the Heart of our Master hundreds of souls, redeemed by His blood. Mother and daughters who unblushingly look upon the dishonor of pure womanhood, whether they gaze at the scene from the boxes of the opera, or from the seats in the pit, are they better than Herodias and Salome of old? And the men, who with glasses glued to their eyes, their faces flushed with passion, encourage such an indignity to womanhood, aye, crave for it, are they not more guilty than Herod and his drunken courtiers?

THE FOUNTAIN OF STRENGTH

SO far lingering in our Holy Hour under the shade of the hills of Jericho we have dwelt upon the courageous testimony which the holy Precursor bore to our Blessed Saviour; now we shall turn our thoughts to the sublime eulogy, pronounced by the lips of our Lord Himself upon the character of John the Baptist.

Jesus had been in Galilee and, as was His wont, had wrought there many wondrous acts of mercy and kindness. His last deed of power and compassion had been the raising from death to life of the son of the widow of Naim. The report of this act of comfort to a sad heart and of His other miracles had gone abroad through the country and had penetrated even the dark dungeon of John's prison at Machærus. From his solitary cell the Baptist sent his disciples with his last message to our Blessed Lord to ask Him: "Art Thou He who is to come, or expect we another?"

This question is no indication of a doubt in the Baptist's mind as to the Messiasship of Christ. The darkness of the dungeon, with its cold, hunger and solitude, could never dim

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for a moment the strong faith of John. His years of schooling on the bleak hills of Judea had long since inured him to his present hardships. No doubts, no fears, like serpents creeping from the damp prison walls, could enter into and intimidate that brave spirit. He knew that he was to decrease while the fame of the Master was to grow and increase. Into the hearts of John's disciples distrust and doubt were penetrating, jealousy and envy were rising there; so he sent them to our Lord fully confident that their darkened minds would be illuminated and their weak wills strengthened by His answer.

To their anxious question came the prompt reply: "Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, to the poor the Gospel is preached." Such was our Lord's gracious response. Pointing to the blind from whose eyes He had just banished the darkness, to the deaf upon whose ears was falling for the first time the music of the human voice, to the dumb whose tongues were loosened, to the maimed and halt upon whom strength of limb had been bestowed, pointing to the poor and wretched who huddled about Him and looked with grat-

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itude into His face, He said: "Go tell your master that to-day the works foretold by the prophets of the Messiah are fulfilled in Me." No reply could have been more convincing, none more conclusive. Deeds are trumpet-tongued and bring conviction deep down into the recesses of the human soul.

Did our Lord send any message of love by the returning disciples to the Baptist? We can scarcely doubt it. No general would neglect to avail himself of an opportunity to offer a word of affection and encouragement to a brave soldier languishing within the walls of the enemy's prison. Sweeter far to the Baptist than the honey in the wilderness, will be the words of the Bridegroom when whispered to him by his returning companions through the bars of his bolted cell. They will strengthen his soul for the last testimony of love which is soon to be required, the testimony of his life, the testimony of his blood.

When the messengers of John were departed Jesus began to speak to the multitude concerning His Forerunner: "What went you out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?" Here we have our Lord's first testimony to the Baptist. When Scribes, Pharisees, Priests, Romans and common people flocked over hill

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and valley and down the roads to the banks of the Jordan, did they expect to find a man as weak as the wind-shaken reeds that lined the edge of the stream? John was not that manner of man. He was not pliant to every gust of public opinion, of one mind to-day and another to-morrow. He was not vehement with the poor and weak, favoring and cringing towards the great and powerful. He was no Rabbi who spoke out boldly when he knew his teaching was pleasing, but remained silent when he suspected it would be unacceptable. Here was a man of fixed and definite convictions with the courage to proclaim them and live up to them. Here was a man who was no reed; though gentle as a woman, yet when a principle was at stake he was of inflexible and truest loyalty. No human respect warped his judgment, no selfishness blinded his clearness of vision, no inordinate ambition drew him aside even a hair's breadth from the great purpose of his life to give testimony to the Master. In the words of our Blessed Saviour he was no wind-shaken reed.

Perhaps we do not realize how much of the reed there is about us in our daily lives. We are like reeds, very graceful, at least in our own eyes, but how lacking in firmness and

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even in gracefulness in the eyes of others. What are we to think of those who are carried hither and thither by each passing fashion, of those whose lives are not rooted in faith and principle, but who follow the dictates of feeling and emotion? How reedlike the victims of human respect! They shiver and tremble before the smile of an upturned lip and thrill with joy if the world nods an approving head. How unlike the Baptist's sterling courage!

"But what went you out to see? A man clothed in soft garments?" "Clothed in soft garments" was no indication of John. He was no soft, effeminate, enervated stickler for the Law. Even before his birth it had been said of him: "He shall be great before the Lord," not with a greatness that comes from the exterior trappings of wealth or position, which may be and often are joined with littleness and meanness and guilt before the Lord. John was great in his destiny and in the fidelity with which he fulfilled it. He was no lover of comfort and ease. His life was lived at no low level; for "John himself had his garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins: and his food was locusts and wild honey." If we compare this with our modern love of food and dress, we hardly ring true

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under our Lord's test of greatness. The present day love of comfort, fear of pain, anxiety about eating and drinking is not calculated to develop the robust, vigorous spiritual life of the Baptist. Men of the Baptist's type are unfamiliar to-day and compare oddly with modern products and standards. Yet John was praised by Divine lips that must speak truly.

"Behold they that are in soft apparel and live delicately are in the houses of kings." John in early years dwelt in the priestly home of Zachary and was no stranger to its comforts. But before the years of boyhood had faded he had left all and found the home of his choice out on the barren bleak hills overlooking the Dead Sea. He was seen once at the court of King Herod. He went there not for its pleasures or amusements, not for its smiles and its honors, not to join in its sins and vices, but to proclaim the truth in the very teeth of an adulterous monarch. He did proclaim it and bore a testimony which cost him his life. Can we imagine John, if he lived to-day, fawning, cringing and bending the knee, to obtain some social advancement? Would he be a hanger-on to the outer fringe of the upper class, or a fawning flatterer before those whose only title to respect is a bank account or a fat purse?

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And yet withal how gentle and kind, and how loving was this "friend of the Bridegroom!"

"But what went you out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet." In the scriptural sense a prophet is not only one who peers into the dim distance and sees the darkness of the coming years and foretells the future, but any ambassador of the Most High who delivers God's message is in the wider sense a prophet. Rightly then was John greater than a prophet. Until our Blessed Lord Himself preached on the Galilean hills and along Genesareth's wave-washed shore, no one had ever spoken as His Forerunner. The Pentecostal Spirit descended upon him, long before He sat in form of fiery tongues upon the Apostles' heads in the upper-room in Jerusalem. Urged by the Spirit, the Baptist went forth to deliver his message with a loyalty true even to the shedding of his blood.

But even in the stricter meaning of the word John was greater than a prophet. The prophets of olden days looked forward through the dim light of the unfolding centuries, through the mists of the unborn years and foretold Him who was to come. John the Baptist recognized and saw with the eyes of the body Him of whom the prophets had sung, and whom they

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had seen in a vision dimly. John pointed out to living men the Messiah who had come; the seers of other days had only foretold His coming. Daniel saw the Messiah in a vision and counted the weeks that were to live and die till Christ should be slain. John proclaimed that the weeks had expired and that the Lamb which had been slain from the beginning of the world was now among the children of men. Isaiah had prophesied: "Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son." The Baptist had looked into the face of that Virgin at the music of whose voice he had already leaped in his mother's womb.

Jeremias in his sufferings and life had typified the Man-God and His sorrows; the story of the future bloody sacrifice on Calvary had been proclaimed in the language of sobs and tears; but the Baptist, of whom the prophets themselves had foretold, had pointed out the very Victim for the sacrifice, the very Lamb that was to be slain. Can we doubt that the vision of Calvary haunted the thoughts of the Baptist when on the banks of the Jordan he showed our Lord to his followers? The beloved Disciple records the scene of which he himself was a part, in a few, simple words: "The next day John saw Jesus coming to him and he

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saith: 'Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world.' " In the Baptist's mind there is no question of a Passover Victim bleeding from the sacrificial knife on Mount Moriah, for as St. Paul tells us, there is no power in the blood of the Temple's victim to blot out sin. He speaks of a Divine Victim who being God and Man can suffer and at the same time by His pain pay the price of our transgressions. Surely then the Baptist is greater than a prophet. How could it be otherwise? Of him Malachias had sung: "I will send you Elias the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." In his mother's womb he had been sanctified by the saving grace of the Redeemer. The angel in the incense-laden sanctuary whispering to Zachary the wondrous story of his birth had promised: "He shall be great before the Lord." His father, priest of the Temple, in his inspired song, had chanted: "and thou child shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His way." In the days of his preaching he pointed out to men the Messiah whom for long centuries they had been expecting. He had boldly proclaimed: "Behold the Lamb of God! This is He of whom I

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said: after me there cometh a Man who is preferred before me, because He was before me." Finally he sealed with his blood the testimony he had given. Can we wonder then that the lips of the Man-God proclaim Him greater than a prophet?

Still higher soars the note of praise; still greater is the eulogy of John from the lips of our Blessed Lord. "This is He of whom it is written, 'Behold I send My angel before Thy face.'" Not only greater than a prophet is the Baptist, but among the angels of the Most High he is classed. He was not—as some have said—an angel by nature clothed in human form tarrying among men as the precursor of the Messias. John was very man as every child of Adam, but he was an angel in his mission and in his life. He was angelic in his mission, for he was sent by the Most High as His legate and ambassador to prepare the way for the coming of the Son of God and to lead men to Christ. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness to give testimony of the Light, that all men might believe through him."

He was an angel in his life. In the inspired language of the Psalms the heavenly spirits are thus described: "Bless the Lord, all ye

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His angels: you that are mighty in strength, and execute His words hearkening to the voice of His orders." How aptly in each detail this language harmonizes with the Baptist's life! How "mighty in strength" was he, to say farewell to the aged Elizabeth and Zachary, who were bent and broken by years, to part with the comforts of that priestly home and to bid adieu to the congenial society of friends and kinsfolk, and to go out to the cold, bleak Judean hills to years of penance, solitude and prayer; surely here is a strength born of Heaven and not of earth. How strong to "execute His words"! When the years of silent contemplation and angelic prayer on the rocky heights had run their course, the Baptist "hearkening to the voice of His orders," came forth to "execute His words." Study the courage of that brave soul, the zeal which burned in that warm heart, the fidelity in that unselfish life, the unswerving trust in that confiding spirit, and you will see a man "mighty in strength" from above, prompt to "execute His words" with the alacrity of angel-hosts, and "hearkening to the voice" with the docility of celestial spirits prostrate before "the great white throne." No wonder our Lord said of His Precursor: "Behold I send My angel before Thy face."

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In our lives there must be the effort to walk in the footsteps of the Baptist. Our constant aim must be to prove ourselves "mighty and strong," strong in our daily lives to reach those ideals which come to us, when "hearkening to the voice of His orders," in the quiet hours before the Tabernacle. For it is from that source of light and strength that we are made "mighty in strength" to execute His words.

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IT will be profitable and consoling to linger several Holy Hours at Bethany, under the shadow of Mount Olivet. There are many lessons taught in the quiet of the little cottage, where Jesus often tarried. At the age of thirty our Lord left the prayerful solitude of Nazareth. He bade an affectionate farewell to His Mother and went out from the home of His boyhood to return no more. From the moment He left the happy home that had sheltered Him all His growing years, He was homeless and without a roof that He could call His own.

As the years of His ministry lengthened there were places up and down the country where no guest would be so welcome, where faces would light up with smiles at His approach, where it would be a joy and an honor beyond the telling to have Him linger for a time; but henceforth He who made the heavens and the earth and held all nature in the hollow of His hand, He who had a home from all eternity in the bosom of the Father, was without a home—without a permanent abode. As He Himself said: "The foxes have holes,

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and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

There were no doubt places where he stayed from time to time. At Cana surely, as He had brightened the marriage feast by His first miracle, the young couple would give Him hospitality with no stinted hand. The simple houses of the Apostles at Capharnaum and Bethsaida along the lake were ever open at His coming. Jairus' gratitude would only too eagerly find expression in the warmth of his welcome, if our Lord would deign to accept. No hospitality could ever repay Christ for bringing back the light and life to that desolate fireside, as He had done when He restored to the broken-hearted parents their dead child, alive again. At Naim, too, where dwelt the widowed mother with her son, so unexpectedly raised from death, there would be a glow in that widow's heart brighter than the glow at sunset in the western sky, when she heard from the lips of the Master as He entered: "Peace be to this house and to all who dwell in it."

Though on His first visit to Nazareth the people forced Him from the synagogue and strove to cast Him from a rocky height; though the Jews took up stones to hurl at Him even in the very porches of the Temple;

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though no one dared offer Him shelter through fear of the Jews, during the trying days of Passion-week, there was one home beyond the Mount of Olives where the warmth of welcome to the Master could be cooled by no threat of intimidation; that was the home at Bethany, the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary. St. John records for us that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus." How much these few words tell us of the inmates of that holy home! No doubt our Lord loved to visit these His friends, when He came up for the feasts of the Passover. Would He not retire to that quiet abode at times after the trying discussions in the Temple, with the Chief Priests and Pharisees? Besides the loving hearts ever eager to welcome Him, there was every natural attraction to lend strength to their frequent pleading. No doubt often on their lips was the prayer of the disciples at Emmaus: "Stay with us, because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent."

Bethany, where He was frequently a guest, was a little hamlet clinging to the lower eastern slope of Mount Olivet and completely hidden from Jerusalem. In bleak, desert hills the land descends as far as Jericho, and even beyond the Jordan. To the southeast stretch the

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Jordan and the Dead Sea. High in the distance loom the Peræan mountains, standing like sentinels guarding the deep valley to the west. Such was the panorama that unfolded itself before the eyes of our Lord when He lingered in that holy abode. Few scenes frequented by our Saviour were more sacred or teemed with holier memories. Beyond the Jordan and along the Dead Sea lay the land conquered by Moses before his death, after he had guided the Israelites during their wanderings for forty years in the desert. There, too, was Mount Nebo, upon which Moses had died in sight of the Promised Land, which he could not enter. Away in the distance gleamed the walls, spires and turrets of Jericho, famous in the annals of the nation.

When Josue succeeded Moses in command, to him it fell to lead the people over the Jordan, and at the blast from his soldiers' trumpets the walls of Jericho fell to the ground. The waters of the Dead Sea are redolent with innumerable memories of Abraham and Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah. On its eastern shore, high up on the rocky heights, is Herod's palace, in the dungeons of which John will languish, while the waters moan and sigh in storm or ripple and laugh in the sunshine against its



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walls. These and other memories will make, we may suppose, Bethany unspeakably dear to the Heart of our Blessed Saviour, and perhaps He will linger over these events in conversation with Martha, Mary and their saintly brother.

When our Lord comes and tarries in our breast in Holy Communion what memories will flood His soul! His thoughts will go back to our happy days of early innocence when our hearts were unstained and untarnished. If the years of our infidelity and wanderings loom up before Him, it will not be that He may reproach us, but that He may pardon more fully the sinful past. He comes and abides with us, not to condemn us, nor to cast our sins in our face, but to wash us more fully from every blemish. When He pardons, He blots out and forgets and creates a new heart within us.

The first visit of our Lord to Bethany, of which we have any mention, occurred about the time of the feast of the Tabernacles. Towards the end of September, after the grapes of the vineyards had been pressed and the fruits of the fields had been garnered, this festival was held by the Jews to commemorate the dwelling of their forefathers in tents in the desert and as a thank-offering for the blessings

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of the year. Our Lord had shortly before, probably on His way up from Jericho, spoken the touching parable of the Good Samaritan. It may be that His teaching on that occasion was suggested by the locality where He found Himself. On the steep ascent from the Jordan to Bethany He could point out the rugged fastnesses of the bleak and barren hills where, even to this day, robbers lurk and waylay the unsuspecting traveller. Be this as it may, He reached Bethany about the time of the feast.

St. Luke tells us: "Now it came to pass as they went, that He entered into a certain town: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sitting also at the Lord's feet heard His word." Was our Lord tired that day after His long journey? Holy Writ tells us of a day at noontide in Samaria when He was tired. Yet when the Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well of Jacob, He strove and battled for her soul. Physically He may be weary, but he is never tired in His quest for our souls. He yearned for them from eternity. He thirsted for them on the cross. Almost the last words which trembled upon His parched and bruised lips was a cry for souls. He longs for them now in the Taber-

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nacle with a passionate love; yet at times we turn our backs and go out among the tombs, to look for life among the dead.

“A certain woman, named Martha, received Him into her house.” Had Martha known of His coming and been watching for His approach? The days are not so far off when the death-shadows will be darkening over her brother, and she will look eagerly for the sight of the Master and listen for the music of His footsteps. Those days will be days of trial and tears to be changed into days of smiles of gratitude and joy—but they are not yet. Martha surely will not merit the reproach given to Simon when our Lord was his guest at the banquet in Galilee: “I entered thy house; thou gavest Me no water for My feet”;—but everything that affection can suggest will be done by the grateful hostess for our Lord’s comfort. Martha busied herself with every preparation that could conduce to the Master’s proper entertainment. In this she has been held up to us a model of the active life, of those who tirelessly labor for our Lord’s interests and glory. Mary sitting at the feet of the Saviour is regarded as an example of the life of prayer.

It were a mistake to fancy that the active life did not include prayer, and at periods very

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much prayer. It is not always true that they pray most who are most on their knees or linger longest under the sanctuary lamp. Time spent before our crucifix or before the Tabernacle which ought to be given to the duties of our state of life, and which when so spent brings about a neglect of home or children, is not acceptable prayer and is ill-employed. Unless the time given to spiritual exercises results in a growth of the spirit of unselfishness and self-sacrifice, unless it makes us more like Him who said, "I came down from Heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me," unless this be the effect of our prayers, devotions, and Holy Communions, there is grave reason for self-sifting in this important matter. For it is quite possible that pious practices become rather a species of self-indulgence and spiritual sensuality than an earnest, robust service of Christ. The unselfing of self that we may put on Christ is the best test of prayer and the best test of piety; the spirituality that rings true under that test is free from delusion.

Martha was busy about many things for the comfort of our Blessed Saviour, and so the true toiler for the Master's vineyard, while engaged in many duties for souls, if he is

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working purely for the glory of God, realizes too keenly how puny and weak his efforts are to win salvation for men, unless in prayer his feeble strivings are strengthened by the power of Christ. Surely he cannot expect to accomplish even by his best endeavors what it required the Blood of the God-Man to effect. But he can do all things in Him who strengtheneth him, and when through prayer his labors have been penetrated by Christ's power then is he strong with a divine force—a force not weak and puny like the forces that are of nature, but a force elevated by the supernatural and strengthened by grace. He will never forget that while the Israelites battled in the field below, Moses was in prayer with arms uplifted on the mountain-top. Natural activity and energy are no slight assets in the labor for souls, but alone they are insufficient; joined to prayer, they are irresistible.

“She had a sister called Mary, who sitting at the Lord's feet, heard His word.” We cannot conjecture what the word was that Mary heard. The brown and red-tinted landscape before Him, dying now in the early days of Autumn, and redolent with incidents in the history of His nation, may have suggested a

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theme. Strange deeds had been done in that Jordan valley, in the years long since dead. If Mary be the Magdalene, as some think, we may be certain that no word of reproach, no gentlest hint, no slightest allusion to the past, will find expression on our Lord's lips. No uneasy dread haunts even for an instant Mary's mind that the sins of other days will be recalled. She knows full well that His mercy stooped to pardon in Galilee. The day she wept at His feet in Simon's house, the stains were forgiven, blotted out and forgotten. The full tide of His mercy has swept over her soul, and purity and repentant love have replaced the blemishes. A garment of innocence whose folds will never lose their divine perfume has been hung over her soul, and Mary looks with gratitude and love into His face and hears His word. The poor infirm woman in the Gospel touched but the hem of His garment and healing went forth from Him, healing of body and spirit. Up in Samaria He told ten lepers to go and show themselves to the priest, and the scales fell away, the blood coursed freely through their veins, corruption ceased and they were cured. But Mary sat at His feet, looked into His face "and heard His word." Did Mary dare utter in her heart the words of the

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Canticle, "Come, show me Thy face, and let Thy voice sound in my ears; for sweet is Thy voice and beauteous Thy face"?

For long years in the Temple Simeon yearned to see that face, yearned to see the Christ before he died. He saw the face of our Mother's Child and then his aged lips sang joyfully the "*Nunc dimittis*." Yet Mary looks into that same face. Never on earth before or since has countenance of man been so beautiful. His own Mother's heart thrilled with an ecstasy of delight beyond the joys of highest seraph, when she beheld that face, the first Christmas night, lighting up the darkness of the cave at Bethlehem. She saw that sweet and beauteous face in all the myriad changes of adorable loveliness during all His up-growing years. And oh! the pain of it, she will see that face blood-stained and bruised on the cross, and when He lies dead in her lap she will wipe from off it the precious Blood. Into this face in all the beauty of His Manhood Mary looked and "heard His word."

Mary had heard His word. His Mother listened to it during the happy years at Nazareth. She taught Him to speak who was the Eternal Word. In His public life that voice was often heard. There is sweet music in the

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murmuring of the waves of a calm night under the stars, there is music in the singing of the birds at dawn as they chant the beginning of a new day; there was music in the voice of David and in his lyre which banished the evil spirit from Saul; there have been human voices that could flood the soul with holiest and fondest memories, could touch and rouse the deepest emotions of the heart, and start tears of infinite tenderness; the angels sang over Bethlehem's hill chords of heavenly sweetness and love, but there has never been and never shall be on earth a music like the voice that Mary heard while sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Yet we, too, can hear that voice; it is pleading with us daily from the Tabernacle. His poor nail-pierced hands are outstretched to us, His eyes with the light of love and sadness look deep into our souls, and He whispers from the Tabernacle with a pathos and tenderness that no human tongue can express: "Come to Me, all ye that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you will find rest for your souls." Many turn away sad and will not hear. Do we listen and obey?

THE FOUNTAIN OF HEALTH

SHORTLY before His Passion our Lord retired from Judea to a place called Bethabara, beyond the Jordan. The jealousy of the Priests and the opposition of the Pharisees were day by day growing more marked, so our Lord left the Holy City and was now staying amid the quiet of the shadow of the Peræan hills. Here He is teaching and instructing all who come to Him, and one day a messenger hurries into His presence and tells Him: "Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick."

Beautiful prayer! It speaks eloquently of the tenderness of the Sacred Heart. It brings out in bold relief the confidence of Martha and Mary. They do not tell the messenger to urge the Master to hasten, no motives are required to induce Him to come. All reasons they could allege are contained in the simple statement of the fact that Lazarus is sick. Surely He will not tarry, He will not delay, for He loves their brother. We sometimes complain of dryness in our thanksgivings after Holy Communion. It is a cause of regret and pain that we cannot pray. Yet what could be easier than to close

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the eyes of the body and see the same Master in our hearts waiting for our message. "Master, he whom Thou lovest is sick with pride, with love of the world, with fear of what people say of him. Master, he whom Thou lovest is slothful, sensual, selfish, jealous, mean, sinful." So we can pray; we need assign no other motive for our cure; we have given utterance to the strongest motive—His love for us. If St. Paul had not told us: "He loved me, and delivered Himself up for me," our own hearts and our daily experience would tell us and tell us truly of His love.

Our Lord remained two days before starting from Bethabara, and the very day the messenger reached Him Lazarus died. Those were sad days in that loved home while the Master was tarrying beyond the Jordan. It may have been that one evening Lazarus returned tired from Jerusalem with a slight fever in his blood. That he was ill did not escape the eyes of his loving sisters. There could be no change in that loved brother that they would not instantly detect. When the sun broke early that crisp March morning over the hills of Moab and flushed with light the Jordan valley and the Dead Sea, and glistened on Mount Olivet, it found Lazarus restless and

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feverish. As the day wore away his fever increased, his temples throbbed, his face was drawn and his eyes became dim and misty ;—yet they never lost their look of gratitude for every kind attention and tender service of the two loving ones who ministered to his slightest need.

Slowly the night passed and when day broke the sisters were anxious indeed. The signs of death were upon that face. "Oh, if the Master were here, he would not die," they said. The messenger was dispatched to Jesus beyond the Jordan to announce that "he whom He loved was sick." With leaden foot the hours creep along. Ever and anon the sisters will look eagerly down the road to see the expected form of the Master coming up the steep ascent. The shadows of the olive trees lengthen down the sides of Olivet, the sunlight ascends higher upon the distant Peræan hills till it kisses the highest peaks, the short twilight lingers a while and dies out over the valley and darkness has come. But a deeper night is falling in the dimly-lit room where the sisters are kneeling at the bedside of Lazarus. All day long they had watched, cheering the patient with the assurance that He would surely come and not delay. They listen for the sound of the loved

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footstep which is not to come up the valley till all is over. The dying patient keeps his eyes longingly fixed upon the door. At times his parched lips murmur: "O Lord Jesus, come, come, and do not tarry." Slowly the hours drop away, the breathing becomes more difficult, the respirations quicker and shorter. "Tell the Master," he said, "that I hoped to see Him ere I died. Tell Him I am content and even happy in the thought that I shall see Him again, for He is the Resurrection and the Life." Mary is on his right and holds his hand, Martha is on his left. With eyes filled with tenderest affection he now looks at one and then at the other. Martha kisses for the last time, she thinks, those cold, blue lips. Mary bends over the hand which she holds and the tears are falling fast. The cold perspiration stands out on his forehead, the limbs twitch and stiffen, the death pallor creeps slowly over his countenance, one last sigh, "O Master, I come," escapes his lips and Lazarus is dead and the two sisters whom Jesus loved are orphans indeed in the chamber of death.

Yet "He still remained in the same place two days." Every incident of the scene in the cottage of Bethany stood out vividly before our Lord's mind as He tarried beyond the

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Jordan. He knew their longing for His coming and their sorrow and grief at His absence. He counted the sighs from the lips of Martha and Mary. He saw the mists of sorrow rise from their hearts, thicken in their eyes, ooze through the long lashes and course down their cheeks. All their agony and anguish stood before Him and pressed with grief His Sacred Heart. He heard Lazarus' murmured inquiries: "Is the Master come?" He saw those dying eyes fixed upon the door which He was not to open, yet "He still remained in the same place two days."

"This sickness is . . . for the glory of God; that the Son of God may be glorified. Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe, but let us go to him." The glory of the Father is the ruling motive of our Lord's life. Everything must be subordinate to that. For three days His Mother sought Him sorrowing through the streets of Jerusalem, because, as He said, He had to be about His Father's business. It was for the Father's glory that He gave back her son to the poor, broken-hearted widow, in all the strength and beauty of his young manhood. For the honor of His Father He brought joy and light to the darkened

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home of Jairus, when he quickened the dead body of the girl with new life. So now for the same reason, though His Sacred Heart yearns to go and dry the tears of Mary and Martha, though He longs to see the smile of welcome on Lazarus' pale face, though details of their grief and sorrow pierce His soul, "He remained in the same place two days."

In many lives our Lord seems to act as He did towards Martha and Mary. There are those that we love and they, too, are sick. Sometimes it may be the little bright-eyed child who has come to gladden a lonely home. The little one is the joy of the father's life, the pulse of the mother's heart. The father hurries from work, forgetful of his toil and fatigue, brightened by the thought of the smile that will greet him. No sweeter music has ever sounded in the mother's ears than the voice of her babe. But the happy days are darkened, the child lies sick unto death. The golden curls are tossed and matted, the little forehead is flushed, the lips are parched and dry, the hands are twitching at the coverlet and the breath is coming shorter and at longer intervals. Father and mother, like Jairus of old, cry out in an agony akin to despair: "O Master, come down and heal our child." Our

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Lord tarries and the light goes out and darkness broods and settles over that home. Was that prayer heard, was that cry of anguish known to the Sacred Heart? It was indeed heard and known and in God's own time granted.

No sincere prayer has ever gone up from the heart of man and not touched the Heart of Christ. They asked for life for their little one and Christ has granted life for evermore. The poor heart-broken parents cannot peer into the future as God can. If they could they would perhaps see a vision that would make them raise heart and hands to Christ and plead: "O Master, blot out that vision, take, oh, take our little one, lest sin one day stain and defile its innocent soul!" Ten thousand times would they rather see its little frame in its white coffin and its soul with God, than later on have to shed bitter tears and go in sorrow to an early grave with their souls crushed by the shame and grief of a child who has wandered from Christ and His Church.

There are moral sicknesses in families that seem unto death. At least there are mothers strong in the faith with torn hearts because the boy they love seems sick unto death. For years they have prayed and yet the Master

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seems to tarry so long beyond the Jordan. The child of their prayer and their pain has wandered far. The world glitters before him and beckons him on. Passions run riot in his blood like an ever-advancing tide that he will not stem. Day by day that tide rises higher and threatens to engulf him. His eyes are blind to things of the spirit and he is deaf to voices of another world. Pray on, loving mother, let the pearls of sorrow for your boy glisten in your eyes and roll down your cheeks, no mother's prayers ever went from earth to Heaven unanswered, no mother's tear has ever been shed and not touched the Sacred Heart. Like Monica of old, you may have to wait many long years. You may grow old and feeble and stand on the brink of the grave. The Master does but tarry, trust Him; He will come. His Heart is ever true and He will give back your boy, the child of your prayers and your tears.

We shall not linger over the journey from beyond the Jordan to Bethany. It was a long and steep ascent, and many a time before, no doubt, our Blessed Saviour had made the tedious journey. Outside the town He is met by Martha, who uttered for the first time those most pitiful and appealing words which have



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become so familiar in the consoling and impressive Gospel of the funeral Mass: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Martha's prayer springing up from her broken heart is not fruitless or in vain. Jesus promises the weeping woman that her brother will be given back to her, though she does not understand: "Thy brother shall rise again." Mary, hearing that the Master had come, "rose up speedily and went" to Him. She fell down at His feet and said to Him: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Doubtless during their brother's illness, as with longing and expectant gaze they watched hopefully the road from Jericho to Bethany, the sorrowing sisters had often uttered these same words: "If the Master comes, He will not die." But the Master "remained in the same place two days." He did not come, and their brother died. Yet Martha and Mary welcome Him with steadfast love and gaze trustingly into His face. How true also the words are! Did He tarry at Bethabara because He could not witness the death of His friend and the grief of the two loving sisters? Who knows? One thing we do know, namely, that the Sacred Heart is unspeakably tender, so that compared with its sympathy and love the

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warmth of a mother's affection over the cradle of a sick and dying child is the veriest coldness.

“‘Where have you laid him?’ They said: ‘Lord, come and see.’ And Jesus wept.” At these words the flood-gates of His compassion broke and the tears burst forth from His eyes and flowed down His cheeks. His friend Lazarus, whom He loved so tenderly, dead and laid away out of sight in the dark tomb in the hillside! Mary and Martha, the two heart-broken sisters, mourning for their loved one! Lazarus dead! Jesus wept, though He had tarried beyond the Jordan. His love for that dying brother and the desolate sisters had urged Him to come ere that brother died and darkness settled upon those affectionate souls, but a greater love for them and for His Father constrained Him to remain away.

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“JESUS, therefore, again groaning in Himself, cometh to the sepulchre.” Still the Master wept, still the heart-pearls of sorrow welled from His soul, glistened in His eyes and coursed down His cheeks. They were tears of sympathy for the sufferings of Martha and Mary, whom He loved and who had so frequently in the past manifested their affection for Him. They were tears shed because of the unbelief of the Jews; for, the very wonder He was about to work, the bringing a dead man out of the grave alive, would not cure their blindness. The opening of that tomb on the hillside will not open their eyes; they will be blinder than the dead Lazarus and their hearts will be harder than the cold rock within whose gloomy bosom his body lies. Those tears are shed for the thousands of His children in all ages, who will be so dead in spirit that even His life-giving grace will not be able to quicken their dead souls; the sound of His voice will meet with no echo in their hearts, because they will reject His call and close their ears to His appeal.

It is strange that the Man-God should

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weep. His soul was at that moment flooded with the vision of the Father's face. At Bethlehem there were tears; the angels saw the Eternal Word in the joy of the Bosom of the Eternal, weeping under the cold winds that blew over the manger the first Christmas night. There were tears when He wept Himself to sleep in His Mother's arms out on the silent solitudes of the desert. There were tears perhaps when He knelt at night on Galilee's hills and with upturned hands and eyes prayed for the children of His pain and His love.

There were tears on Olivet's height on Palm Sunday morning as He looked down upon the domes and spires and turrets of the Temple on Mount Moriah glistening in the sunlight; tears there were that day for the Priest and Scribe and Pharisee who were conspiring to take away His life; tears, too, for the multitudes led astray by their rulers, who in a few days would be crying out, "His blood be upon us and upon our children"; tears for the ill-fated city which in less than seventy years would be surrounded by the Roman army, the streets of which would run with the blood of the children of those crying out on the slopes of Olivet: "Hosanna to the Son

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of David!" There were tears, too, over us as our Lord's vision peered into the future and looked into our cold hearts. How close those tears bring us to our Blessed Saviour! We know, of course, that His Sacred Heart is infinitely kind, tender and loving, yet when we see the tears on His cheeks this truth is borne in upon us with more force; they bring us nearer to Him. What a comfort it is in days of sorrow, when the dark shadow sits at our fireside, when those we loved have gone out from our homes never to return, when the music of their laughter has died away, when the song of loved voices is still, and the clasp of warm hands missed, what a comfort to know that our Blessed Lord Himself shed tears, and that tears of resignation are pleasing to the eye of God!

Out then to the hillside of sorrow and death He went. He bade them take away the stone which hid the dead body of His friend. The pale and trembling spectators had perhaps heard of the day when outside of Naim's gate He had said to the widow's son: "Young man, I say to thee, arise." Perhaps they had listened to the Galileans as they told of the giving back of Jairus's daughter to the heart-broken father and mother, when the child lay

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dead in their quiet home by the Lake. Now they looked into the face of Christ with awe and reverence. Every eye was fixed upon Him. Suddenly the clear voice rang out along the mountain and pierced the grave. "He cried out with a loud voice: 'Lazarus, come forth!' " And in obedience to His command "he that had been dead came forth." That voice had commanded the winds and the waves of Genesareth, and they were hushed and stilled. It had said to the leper: "Be thou made clean" and the leper was cleansed. It had told Magdalene that her sins were forgiven, and her soul became as white as the driven snow on Lebanon. It had commanded the evil one: "Begone Satan!" and then the devil left Him. So that same voice calls Lazarus from the tomb, and he obeys and comes forth with the light of gratitude in his eyes and words of love on his lips. Surely "the voice of the Lord is power, the voice of the Lord is magnificence," and the Heart of the Lord is unspeakable sympathy and love. With fingers made deft by affection and hands quick with sisterly joy, Martha and Mary loosen the swathing bands which encircled their brother who had been dead and was now alive. Then truly was their happiness complete, and now

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it was clear why the Master tarried in the same place two days. For their joy was the greater because of the sadness which had gone before.

The same Blessed Saviour is with us, not at intervals as He was with Lazarus and Martha and Mary in Bethany. For it was only from time to time and for short periods in His busy public life that He lingered in that home which He loved so well and where His coming was so eagerly looked for and appreciated. But in our case it is so different. He is ever with us, on our altars, in our tabernacles. The light of the sanctuary lamp, which never goes out, tells us of His presence. He dwells, then, not two days, but all our days, yearning and longing for us to come to Him. "And His name shall be called Emmanuel, God with us." Truly "great is He that is in the midst of thee, the Holy One of Israel." He promised to abide with us and He has kept His word. "I will establish them and multiply them, and will set My Sanctuary in the midst of them for ever. And My Tabernacle shall be with them, and I will be their God and they shall be My people."

Here, then, He is on our altars just as truly as He ever was at Bethany. The miracle

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wrought there that cold March day, and greater miracles He is constantly performing. There are more deaths than that of the body. There is a death that is not seen by the eye. It is not a death that stops the heart, stills the pulse, chills the blood and freezes the limbs. There is the death of the soul, the death which closes the eye to heavenly truths, chills the spirit against the warmth of God's grace, freezes and hardens the heart to the influence of the Holy Spirit,—the death of all that is spiritual and immortal. Hour after hour, and day after day, throughout the length of the years, that same voice which commanded Lazarus to come forth is bidding thousands and thousands of souls to come forth, not from the dismal darkness of the grave, but from the deeper and blacker darkness of sin. Out from the Tabernacle comes that voice, and those who have wandered far from the Father's house into a distant country hear and return. Out from the Tabernacle comes that voice: "Begone Satan," and temptations vanish, spectres fly away, hideous sights and forms and visions disappear. Out from the Tabernacle comes that voice: "Be thou made clean," and souls corrupting and decaying from the leprosy of sin are made as white as

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the driven foam on the salt sea. Out from the Tabernacle comes that voice: "Take up your cross and follow Me," and the burden that was heavy becomes light and the yoke that was bitter is rendered sweet. Out from the Tabernacle comes that voice: "Fear not, it is I," and tears on wet cheeks are replaced by smiles; timid, cowardly hearts are made strong; feeble, weak wills become loyal and brave. Out from the Tabernacle comes that voice: "Follow Me," and ties dearer than life are severed, loves that are natural are consecrated, and young lives, notwithstanding the loud clamors of flesh and blood, are devoted to Christ and His Church.

Long years ago, just before His Passion He had prophesied from the porches of the Temple: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself." Now this He said, signifying what death He should die. That same death He dies daily in mystic manner on the altar. There He has lifted up the throne of His healing, and stretching out His poor bleeding hands and mingling His tears with blood He pleads with us for our love, pleads with us so lovingly: "Come to Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will refresh you."

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